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THE BOYS STICK THE DARNING NEEDLE INTO THE EGGSHELL

Popular Fairy Tales

HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN



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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Hans Christian Andersen was born in Odense, Denmark, in 1805, the son of a poor shoemaker. Left an orphan at the age of eleven, he had a rather chequered youth, but managed to obtain some education at a grammar school. He published his first book in 1822, and made a decided hit in 1835 with a novel, *The Improvisatore*. Other novels followed, including *O T* (1836), *Only a Fiddler* (1837), *The Two Baronesses* (1849), and *To Be or Not To Be* (1857), but his European fame rests upon his fairy tales, which are assured of immortality. The first series of these appeared in 1835, and the last in 1872. He died near Copenhagen in 1875.

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POPULAR FAIRY TALES

THE FELLOW TRAVELLER

POOR HANS was very unhappy, for his father was at the point of death. Besides the two there was no one at all in the little room, and the lamp on the table had nearly burned out, for it was late in the night.

"You have been a good son, Hans," said the dying father, "and God will be with you, and help you through the world."

He looked fondly at the boy with his grave loving eyes, drew a deep breath, and died. It seemed as if he had but fallen asleep. Hans wept bitterly. Now he had no one in the wide world, neither father nor mother, sister nor brother. Poor Hans! He knelt down beside the bed, and kissed his dead father's hand, weeping bitter tears till, at last, his eyes closed, and he fell asleep, his head resting against the hard corner of the bedstead.

He dreamed a strange dream. He saw sun and moon bowing before him, and he saw his father fresh and healthy again, and he heard him laugh as he had been wont to laugh when he was very happy. A beautiful girl, with a gold crown upon her long shining hair, stretched out her hand to him, and his father said, "See what a bride you have won! She is the loveliest maiden in the world." Then he awoke, and all the beautiful things were gone, his father lay cold and dead in his bed, and he was all alone. Poor Hans!

The next week the funeral took place. Hans walked close behind the coffin, and knew that he would never again see the father whom he had so dearly loved. He heard the earth fall on the coffin lid, and watched it until only one

corner was left uncovered—one more shovelful of earth, and that, too, was seen no longer. He felt as though his heart must burst with sorrow. The people round the grave were singing a psalm. Words and music melted into each other so sweetly that they brought the tears into his eyes. He wept, and weeping relieved him.

The sun shone brightly on the green trees, as if to say (‘You must no longer be sorrowful, Hans. Do you not see how lovely the sky is? Your father is up there now, and is praying to God, the All-loving, that everything may go well with you in all time coming.’ ”

“I too will always be good,” said Hans, “and then I will go to heaven to my father, and what a joy it will be when we see each other again. How much I shall have to tell him, and he will be able to make clear to me so fully the joys of heaven, and to teach me as he used to do on earth. O, what a joy it will be!” He pictured it all so vividly, that he smiled, even while the tears ran down his cheeks. The little birds sat up in the chestnut tree and twittered, “Tweet, tweet!” They were cheerful and glad, though the funeral had been beside them, for they knew that the dead man was now in heaven, and had wings prettier and longer than their own, that now he was happy, because here on earth he had been good, and therefore they were glad. Hans saw how they flew away out of the green trees into the wide world, and he would have liked to fly with them.

But first he had to carve a large wooden cross to set on his father's grave. He brought it that same evening, and found that the grave was already strewn with sand and flowers. Strangers had done this, for all loved the good father who was dead.

Early next morning Hans packed up his little bundle, and carefully put away in his belt his whole inheritance, consisting of fifty dollars and a couple of shillings. With these he would set out on his wanderings. But first he went to his father's grave, repeated once “Our Father”, and then said, “Farewell”

All the flowers beside the footpath which Hans now trod looked fresh and bright in the warm sunshine, and when

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the wind passed over them they nodded, as if they would say, "Welcome to the green meadow-lands! Is it not lovely here?" But Hans turned to have another look at the old church where, as a child, he had been baptized, and to which he had gone every Sunday with his father to worship God, and to join in singing to His praise, and there he saw standing high up at one of the openings of the tower, the church goblin with his little pointed red cap. Shading his eyes from the sun with his bent arm, Hans nodded farewell to him, and the little goblin waved his red cap, put his hand to his heart, and kissed it many times to him to show his goodwill to him, and that he wished him a happy journey.

Hans now began to think of the many beautiful sights he would see in the great glorious world, and he walked on faster and faster, farther and farther, by roads that he had never walked before. He knew not the villages he passed through, nor the people that he met. He was in a strange land, and surrounded by strangers.

The first night he slept in a haystack under the open sky. Other couch he had none, but he was perfectly satisfied, and thought that even the King could not wish for a better. The meadow with the brooklet flowing through it, and the blue heavens above, formed a beautiful bedroom. The green grass, with its tiny red and white flowerets, was his carpet, the elder bushes and wild roses were vases of flowers, and the brooklet, with the reeds on its banks that nodded to him a friendly "good morning" and "good evening", served as his water ewer. The moon, high up amid the blue, was a glorious night-lamp, yet there was no danger of its setting fire to the curtains, Hans could sleep in perfect security. And he slept well and soundly, and did not wake till the sun had risen, and all the little birds around him sang, "Good morning, good morning! have you not yet got up?"

On reaching the next village, he heard the church bells ringing. It was Sunday, and the people were going to church, and Hans went with them, sang hymns, and listened to the Word of God. He felt as though he were once again in his own church, where he had been baptized, and had, Sunday after Sunday, sung the psalms with his father.

In the churchyard outside there were many graves, and on some of them high grass was growing. "Perhaps my father's grave will soon look like these," thought Hans, "now that I am away, and there is no one to pluck out the grass and strew flowers over it."

So he set to work to clear the graves from weeds, raised those wooden crosses that had fallen down, and put back in their places the wreaths that the wind had carried away. "Who knows but that someone may do the same by my father's grave, since I cannot do it!" thought he. At the churchyard gate stood an old beggar man, leaning on his crutch, Hans gave him his silver shillings, and then went on his way more cheerful and happier than ever.

Towards evening a tempest arose, and Hans made great haste to get under shelter, but night had gathered round him before he caught sight of a little church, which stood alone on the top of a hill. The door was ajar, and he crept in.

"I will sit down in this corner," said he, "I am quite tired out, and it will do me good to rest a while." And after folding his hands and repeating his evening prayer, he leaned his head back against the wall and fell into a sound sleep, whilst it lightened and thundered outside.

When he awoke it was still night, but the storm had passed over, and the moon shone in through the high church windows, its light falling full upon an open coffin, with a dead body in it, in the middle of the church. Hans did not feel terrified at this sight, for he had a good conscience, and he knew that the dead can do no harm to anyone, it is only the living, the wicked, that work us ill. And two such wicked men stood by the coffin. They were come to take the poor corpse out of the coffin and throw it out at the church door.

"Why do you do that?" asked Hans, when he found out what they were going to do. "It is very wicked of you. In Christ's name, let him rest in peace!"

"Stuff!" cried both the dreadful men. "He has cheated us. He owed us money which he could not repay, and now he is dead, and we will never see a penny of it. But we'll

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have our revenge, and he shall be like a dog outside the church door”

“I have only fifty dollars,” said Hans, “that is my whole fortune, but I will gladly give them to you if you will faithfully promise to leave the dead man in peace. I shall be able to get on without the money, no doubt, I have strong, healthy limbs, and the good God will always help me”

“Of course,” said the men, “if you will pay his debts, we shall do him no harm, you may depend upon that” So they took the money Hans offered, laughed scornfully at his simplicity, and went their way. But Hans laid the corpse straight in the coffin, folded the cold, stiff hands, took leave of the dead man, left the church, and walked with a light heart through the great forest.

All around him, where the moonlight shone in through the trees, he saw the loveliest little elves at play. They were not in the least startled at his approach, for they knew that he was good and harmless, since none but those who are free from evil thoughts and wishes have power to see the elves. Some of these were no larger than a finger breadth, and they had their long flaxen hair fastened up with golden combs. They see-sawed two and two upon the heavy drops of dew that spangled the leaves and grass. Every now and then a dewdrop trickled down, and two little sprites fell with it into the long grass, and then what laughter there was among the rest! It was charming! They sang too, and Hans remembered that he had learnt all these pretty songs and glees when he was a little boy. And big speckled spiders, with silver crowns on their heads, were made to spin long suspension bridges and palaces from one tree to another for them, and when the dew fell upon these they glistened like glass in the clear moonlight. Their gambols went on till sunrise, and then the elves crept into the flower-cups to sleep, and the winds took hold of their airy castles and suspension bridges and made them fly like cobwebs through the air.

Hans had just stepped out from the wood, when a deep, manly voice shouted from behind him, “Halloo, comrade! whither go you?”

"Out into the wide world," replied Hans. "I have neither father nor mother, I am a poor lad, but the Lord will help me."

"I too am going into the world," said the stranger. "Shall we two go along with one another?"

"Why should we not?" answered Hans, and they went on together. Very soon they became good friends. But Hans saw clearly that the stranger was much cleverer than he was, he seemed to have travelled in every country on the earth and to have learnt everything.

It was almost noon, and the sun stood high above their heads, when they sat down under a wide-spreading tree to eat their breakfast. At that moment an old woman, very much wrinkled and almost crook-backed, came hobbling by on her crutch. On her shoulders she carried a bundle of faggots which she had gathered in the wood. She had her apron gathered up, and out of a corner of it peeped three bundles of ferns and some willow twigs. Just as she was passing them her foot slipped; she fell, and gave vent to a shrill cry of pain, for she had broken her leg, poor old woman! Hans sprang up to help her, and proposed that they should carry her home, but his companion opened his knapsack, took out of it a little box, and said that he had there a salve which would at once heal her leg and restore its strength, so that she would be able to walk home without help as easily as if she had not fallen down at all. All that he asked in return was that she should give him the three bundles of ferns and willow twigs she carried in her apron.

"That would be a good price, master doctor," quoth the crone, nodding her head quite queerly. She did not like to part with her roots, she said, but it was far from pleasant to lie there with her leg broken, so she gave the contents of her apron to the stranger, and he anointed her leg with his precious ointment. Then the old woman rose up and hobbled onward, walking with less difficulty than before she had fallen down. A capital ointment this! but not to be had at the chemist's.

"What can you want with those roots?" asked Hans of his fellow traveller.

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"These are three beautiful herb blooms," said he, "and I like them very much, because I have foolish whims some times" Then they walked on for a long way "See how the sky is overcast," said Hans, and he pointed upwards "Those are terribly thick clouds"

"Those are not clouds," said his companion, "they are mountains—great, noble mountains! On their crests we shall be above the clouds and in the fresh air Believe me, it is delightful there To-morrow we shall surely be afar in the world"

But the mountains were not so near as they seemed, and the wanderers had to travel the whole day before they came to them Black fir-woods clothed the mountain sides, and piles of stones as large as towns lay scattered here and there It would cost them hard labour, the stranger said, to cross the mountains So he and Hans turned into an inn to rest, so that they might start fresh on their journey on the morrow

They found the public room crowded, for a man with a puppet show had just arrived and set up his little theatre, and the people had been gathering together to see the performance They sat on chairs ranged round the room, but right in front, in the best place of all was a stout butcher with a great bull dog by his side, a grim-looking animal, that stood staring with all his might, just like any other onlooker

And now the show began. A King and Queen were discovered sitting on magnificent thrones, wearing gold crowns, and with long trains to their robes The prettiest little wooden dolls, with glass eyes and thick mustaches, stood at the doors and windows, which they kept opening and shutting, so that their Majesties might enjoy a free current of air It was a very pretty comedy But just as the Queen rose up from her throne and walked across the floor, the great bull dog, whom the stout butcher had forgotten to hold, sprang up, and with one bound clearing the stage, seized the pretty Queen by her slender waist so roughly that she was broken in two It was dreadful! The poor showman was so much grieved that he was very near shedding tears The Queen was his prettiest doll, and the ugly bull dog had bitten her head off But after the people had all gone away, Hans' fellow traveller went to

the poor man and said he would soon make her all right. Then he took out the little box he had used to heal the old woman's leg, and rubbed some of the ointment over the wounded doll, after which, not only was it perfectly right again, but it had the power of moving all its limbs by itself, so that there was no need to pull the wires, for the doll acted like a living being, except that it could not speak. The showman was greatly delighted to see his Queen doll dance and walk by herself, it was what none of his other dolls could do.

Late in the night, when all the people in the inn were in bed, a heavy groaning and sighing was heard, and it went on so long that at last everybody got up to see what could be the matter. The showman rushed to his little theatre, for it seemed to him that the sighing came from it. And a strange sight met his eyes. All the puppets, the King and the soldiers, were lying heaped one upon another, keeping up a perpetual groaning, and staring with their great glassy eyes, for they all wished to be anointed, as their Queen had been, so that they too might be able to move of themselves. The Queen knelt on one knee, and lifted her pretty gold crown on high, as though beseeching, "Take my crown if you will, only anoint my consort and my courtiers!" The showman could scarcely keep from weeping, he was so much affected by this scene. Then he spoke to the fellow traveller, and offered him all the money he might get for his entertainment next evening, if he would anoint four or five of his best dolls. But the stranger said he did not want his money, but he would take the large sabre which the showman wore by his side. As soon as he got the sword he anointed six of the dolls, and they were able immediately to dance so prettily and gracefully that all the young girls in the inn who were present felt an irresistible inclination to begin dancing too. And dance they did, and coachman and kitchen maid, waiter and chamber maid, danced also, and all the guests joined them. Even the fire-tongs advanced and led out the shovel to perform the mazurka, but no sooner had these two made the first stamp than they fell down, one over the other. Oh, what a merry night that was!

Next morning Hans and his fellow traveller started early to climb up the high mountains through the vast pine-woods

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They had clambered up so high that the church towers beneath them showed like little blue specks among the green, and they could see over many, many miles of country. So much of the beauty of this fair world Hans had never before seen, and the sun shone warmly amid the blue vault of heaven, and the wind bore to him the notes of hunters' bugle-horns. So sweet and wild were they that the tears stood in his eyes, and he could not help crying out, "O, God of goodness and love! I would worship Thee, for Thou art good to us all, and hast given us all the beauty that is in the world". His comrade stood by with folded hands, and looked at the woods and the towns out there in the warm sunshine. Presently a strain of deep, unearthly music seemed floating over their heads. They looked up, and saw a large white swan hovering in the air and singing as they had never before heard any bird sing. Fainter and fainter grew the notes, its head drooped, and it sank slowly downwards, till at last it fell dead at their feet. "The lovely bird!"

"Two lovely wings," said the stranger, "so large and white as those this bird has, are worth money. I will take them with me. Now, you see, Hans," added he, as with one stroke he severed the wings from the dead swan, "that this swan is of some use to me."

They continued their journey over the mountains for many, many leagues, till at last they saw beneath them a large city with more than a hundred towers glistening like silver in the sunshine. In the middle of the city was a stately marble palace roofed with red gold, and in it dwelt the King.

Hans and his fellow traveller did not choose to go straight into the city, but stopped at a little inn outside the town to shake the dust off their clothes, for they wished to be tidy when they came into the streets of the city. The innkeeper told them that the King was a kind, good hearted old man, and had never done an ill turn to anyone all his life, but that his daughter, the Princess, was a very wicked lady. She had no lack of beauty, for scarcely in all the world could a fairer maiden be found, but then she was a wicked witch, and through her evil arts many a young and comely Prince had lost his life.

Anyone was at liberty to propose to her, be he a prince or be he a beggar, it was all the same to her. She made him play with her at "What are my thoughts like?" and if he could guess her thought three times, then she would marry him, and he would be king over the whole country when he father died. But if he could not guess right the three times she had him hanged or beheaded. Her father, the old King, was cut to the heart by her wickedness and cruelty, but he could not interfere, for he had once said that he would have nothing to do with her love affairs, that he might do exactly as she pleased. Every young prince that came to play at this cruel game with her had failed, and was either hanged or beheaded. They had always been warned in time, and ought have left her alone. The old King, so grieved by all the misery thus brought upon the land, that he and all his soldiers spent one day every year in fasting and prayer, kneeling all day on the hard stone, praying that the Prince's cruel heart might relent, but which he never would.

"The hateful Princess!" said Hans. "She should really be flogged; it would do her good. Were I the old King she should be well beaten." Just then a loud "Hurrah!" from the people in the road made him hurry to the window. The Princess was riding past, and so wonderfully beautiful was she that people forgot her cruelty and shouted "Hurrah!"

Twelve fair young girls, clad in white silk and bearing each a golden tulip in her hand, rode on cool black steeds before or beside her. The Princess herself rode a snow-white horse decked with rubies and diamonds. Her riding habit was of cloth of gold, and the whip in her hand glittered like a sunbeam; the gold crown on her head was like the little stars in the sky, and her gauze-like mantle was made of many thousand butterflies' wings sewn together. Yet she herself was still more lovely than her clothes.

When Hans saw her, the blood rushed to his face, and he could not utter a single word. The Princess looked, in truth, the very same as the fair maiden wearing the gold crown whom he had seen in his dream on the night of his father's death. So beautiful he could not have imagined any mortal maiden to be, and he could not help loving her with all his

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heart. "It could not be true," he thought, ~~that she was~~ really a wicked witch, who had people hanged or beheaded when they could not guess her thoughts. ~~Everyone has free~~ leave to become her suitor, even the poorest. ~~I will~~ certainly go to the palace, for I cannot help myself."

They all tried to persuade him to give up this idea, saying he would fare no better than the other suitors. His fellow traveller especially begged him not to go, but Hans had made up his mind that it would be all right. He carefully brushed his coat and his shoes, washed his hands and face, combed his long fair hair, and started on his way through the city, straight up to the marble palace. "Come in!" said the King when Hans knocked at the door. Hans entered, and the good old King in his dressing-gown and embroidered slippers came to meet him. He had his gold crown on his head, and held in one hand the sceptre, in the other the imperial globe. "Wait a little," said he, and put the globe under one arm so as to be able to stretch out the other hand to Hans. As soon as he heard that Hans came as a suitor he began to weep most bitterly, so that sceptre and orb rolled down on the floor, and he was obliged to dry his eyes on his dressing-gown. Poor old King! "Do not think of it!" he begged, "it will be with you as with all the rest. Come and look here."

Then he led Hans out into the Princess's pleasure-garden, and there he saw a ghastly sight. On every tree hung the wasted skeletons of three or four kings' sons who had wooed the Princess but had not been able to guess her thoughts. In every breeze the dry skeletons rattled so that the birds had all been scared away, and durst not enter the garden. The flowers were tied to human bones instead of sticks, and gusly skulls grinned from behind every flowerpot.

"You see what's here!" said the old King to Hans, "your fate will be just the same as that of those. Do not attempt it, or you will make me very unhappy, because I take these things so much to heart."

Hans kissed the hand of the kind old King, and told him he felt quite sure that it would be all right, for he was enchanted with the beautiful Princess.

Then the Princess herself came riding into the court of the

palace with all her ladies. The King and Hans went up to her and wished her good day. She looked wonderfully beautiful as she offered her hand to Hans, and he loved her more than ever, and could less than ever believe that she was the wicked witch people said she was.

Then they went together into the hall, and prettily dressed little pages came in and handed round sweetmeats and gingerbread nuts to everyone, but the old King was so sad that he could enjoy nothing, besides, the gingerbread nuts were too hard for his teeth.

It was settled that Hans should come to the palace next morning, and that the judges and the whole council should be present as witnesses to the Princess's game of "What are my thoughts like?" If he guessed rightly, he was to come in the same way on the two following days, but if not, he should lose his life. So far there had been no one who had guessed rightly even once.

Hans was not at all anxious as to how things would go with him, he was rather delighted. He thought only of the beautiful Princess, and believed the more firmly that God would help him. But how he knew not, and he did not even care to think about it. Almost dancing with joy, he made his way back out of the town to the roadside inn, where his fellow traveller was awaiting him.

Hans would never have wearied of telling how kind the Princess had been to him, and how lovely she was. He longed ardently for the morrow, when he might again go to the palace, and when he must guess the thought of his beloved.

But his fellow traveller sadly shook his head. "I love you so much!" he said, "and we might yet have been a long while together, and now I must lose you! My poor, dear Hans! I could weep, but I will not disturb your happiness on the last evening perhaps that we may spend together. We will be merry, right merry. To-morrow, when you are gone, I shall have time enough to weep."

All the people in the city had heard by this time of the arrival of a new suitor for the Princess, and there was great sorrow because of the news. All the theatres were closed, the



HANS ENTERS THE PRINCESS'S PLEASURE GARDEN

women who sold sweetmeats tied crape round their sugar men, and the King and the priests knelt in the church. There was great grief, for no one thought it possible that Hans would fare better than the suitors that had come before him.

That evening the fellow traveller ordered a large bowl of punch, and said to Hans, "Now let us be merry, and drink to the Princess's health." But after Hans had drunk two glasses he was unable to keep his eyes open, and fell into a sound sleep. Then the fellow traveller lifted him gently into bed, and it being now night and quite dark, he took out the large wings that he had cut off from the dead swan, and fastened them upon his shoulders. Then he took the largest of the three roots he had got from the old woman who had fallen and broken her leg, and put it in his pocket, and having opened the window, he flew into the city straight to the marble palace, and seated himself in the corner of a bow window belonging to the Princess's bedroom.

Perfect stillness reigned throughout the city. At last the clock struck a quarter to twelve, the Princess's window opened, and the Princess herself, clad in a loose white mantle, and borne up by long black wings, flew away over the town towards a high mountain in the distance. The fellow traveller, who had made himself invisible, followed the Princess through the air, and whipped her with his rod so that the blood came wherever he struck. Ah! it was a wonderful journey through the air. The wind caught her mantle and kept it fluttering to and fro till it spread out like a wide ship-sail on either side of her, the moon shining through it.

"How it hails! How it hails!" said the Princess at each stroke she received from the rod. And it served her right. At last she reached the mountain and knocked. Then a deep hollow rumbling, like thunder, was heard, the mountain opened, and the Princess entered, Hans' fellow traveller still following, for no one could see him, he having made himself invisible.

They went through a long wide passage whose walls glistened like fire, for more than a thousand gleaming spiders were running up and down them. The passage led into a large hall built of silver and gold. Flowers—some red, some blue, and

as large as sunflowers—glistered from the walls, but if anyone had dared to go near to try to pluck them, he would soon have discovered that their green twisted stalks were in reality poisonous snakes, and that the false flowers themselves were formed by the red and blue fire that issued from their venomous mouths. The ceiling was covered with shining glow-worms and bats, which kept flapping their thin bluish wings. In the centre of the hall stood a throne supported upon four horse skeletons harnessed with the web of the fiery-red spiders. The throne itself was of milk-white glass, and the cushions were little black mice, who were continually snapping and biting at one another's tails. Above it was a canopy of crimson spiders' webs, studded with the prettiest little green flies, all glittering like precious stones. On the throne sat an aged magician, wearing a crown on his ugly head, and holding a sceptre in his hand. He kissed the Princess on the forehead, and bade her sit down on the throne beside him. And then the band struck up. Great black grasshoppers played on the jews'-harp, and the owl came out with his "Tu-whit, tu-whoo!" as chief singer. Little black goblins, with wills-o'-the-wisp on their caps, danced round and round the hall. But no one could see the fellow traveller, who had placed himself just behind the throne, where he could see and hear everything. The courtiers who entered now looked noble and grand, but anyone with an eye in his head could see that they were in reality nothing else than broomsticks with cabbage heads, which the magician had bewitched into some sort of life, and to which he had given gaily embroidered dresses. They just served to keep up his state, and what did he want more?

After the dancing had gone on for some time, the Princess told the magician that she had a new suiton, and asked what she should think of next morning when he came up to the palace to guess her thoughts.

"Listen! I will tell you," said the magician. "Choose something very easy and simple, and he will be the less likely to think of it. Think on your own shoe, that he will never guess. Then you can have his head cut off, but mind to bring me his eyes to-morrow night that I may eat them."

The Princess bowed very low, and promised not to forget. Presently the magician repeated some magic words which made the mountain open, and the Princess flew out again, but Hans' fellow traveller followed her, swift as thought, and flogged her so much that the Princess sighed heavily over the hailstorm, and made all possible haste to get back to the bow window of her sleeping-room. And the fellow traveller, who was right weary of his night's exercise, flew quickly back to the room where Hans lay asleep, took off his wings, and laid himself down to rest.

Quite early in the morning Hans awoke, and his fellow traveller arose also. He would not tell Hans of his flying adventure during the night, but, without making any mention of the mountain magician, he begged Hans, when he went up to the palace, to ask the Princess if she had not thought of her own shoe.

"I may as well guess that as anything else," said Hans, "and truly, I believe the angels may have whispered it to you during the night, my friend, for I hope and trust they are on my side. But now let us say farewell, for if I do not guess right, I shall not see you again."

Then they bade each other farewell, and Hans went on his way to the palace. The great hall was crowded with people. The councillors were seated in large easy chairs, with cushions of eider down to lean their heads upon, because they had so many things to think about. The old King rose up when Hans came in, and he began drying his eyes with a white pocket handkerchief. Presently the Princess entered. She looked lovelier even than she had looked the day before, and greeted the whole assembly with a most winning smile, but to Hans she held out her hand, saying, "Good morning, my friend."

"And now the game began. 'What are my thoughts like?' asked the Princess, and she looked at Hans archly as she spoke. But no sooner did he utter the single word 'Shoe', than she turned pale, and her limbs began to tremble. All her wisdom could not help her, she could not deny that he had guessed right."

Hurrah! how glad the good old King was. He jumped up

and kicked his slippers into the air for joy, and the spectators all clapped their hands, some to applaud the King, and some to show how pleased they were at Hans' victory—for victory it was for this one day at least

His fellow traveller also was glad when he heard of Hans' success, but Hans himself folded his hands in thankfulness to God who, he felt sure, would still help him, for the very next day he must undergo his second trial

The evening passed just like the evening before, and, as soon as Hans was asleep, his fellow traveller flew out, and followed the Princess to the mountain. This time he took two rods with him, and he flogged the Princess harder than he had done before. No one saw him enter with her, but he was there, nevertheless, and heard and saw everything that went on. This time it was settled that the Princess should think of her glove, and the fellow traveller told Hans what to say, as if he had again heard it in a dream. The next day, therefore, Hans was again able to guess rightly, and it made the people of the palace very glad

The whole Court cut capers when they heard it, just as they had seen the King do on the day before, but as for the Princess, she threw herself down upon a sofa and would not speak a single word

And now Hans had but to guess once more. If he guessed rightly, the beautiful Princess whom he loved would become his bride, and he should be king over the whole country after her old father's death, but if he guessed wrongly, then he must lose his life, and his bright blue eyes would be carried as a titbit to the wicked magician

Hans said his prayers and went to rest earlier than usual that evening, and soon fell sound asleep. His fellow traveller then fastened the swan wings on his shoulders, buckled the sabre to his girdle, took all the three wizard wands in his hand, and flew off to the marble palace

The night was pitch dark, and it was so stormy that the tiles were blown from the roofs of the houses, and the trees in the garden of skeletons bowed like reeds to the blast. It lightened every moment, and the thunder rolled on as though it would never cease the whole night long. The bow window opened,

and the Princess flew out. She was pale as death—not that she was afraid of tempests, for she was wont to delight in them, but this night, when her white mantle spread out around her like a sail unfurled by the wind, and the strokes of the fellow traveller's three rods fell on her till the blood trickled down, she found herself scarce able to fly, and felt every moment as if she must sink to the ground. She struggled on, however, and managed at last to reach the weird mountain.

"There's such a hailstorm without!" said she on entering, "I never knew such weather as it is."

"Yes. One may sometimes have too much, even of a good thing," replied the magician.

And then she told him, shivering with fear and dread all the while, that Hans had guessed right the second time, and if he should succeed on the third trial also the game would be his indeed, and she might never again come to the mountain, never again practise the magic arts it had cost her so much to learn. And she wept most bitterly.

"Never fear, he shall not guess this time, depend upon it!" replied the magician. "I will find something he has never thought of in his life, unless, indeed, he be a greater wizard than myself. But now let us be merry!" And he took the Princess by the hand and danced with her all round the hall, the little goblins and wills-o'-the-wisp all doing the like, and the red spiders springing merrily up and down, while the flowers of fire on the wall appeared to throw out sparks. The owl beat the drum with all his might, the crickets chirped, and the grasshoppers played on the jews'-harps. It was an airy dance.

After they had danced themselves weary, the Princess said she must hasten home, for she feared she might be missed at the palace. The magician then said he would go home with her, so that they might have the more time together.

So away they flew through the storm, and the fellow traveller followed them and broke his three wands on their shoulders. Never had the old magician been out in such a storm. When they got to the palace he bade the Princess

farewell, and at the same moment whispered to her, "Tomorrow, think of my head!" But Hans' fellow traveller heard it, and just as the Princess slipped into her room through the window, and the magician was about to turn round and fly back to his mountain, he seized him by the long black beard, and, drawing his sabre, cut off his ugly head, just behind the shoulders, so that the magician never once saw who attacked him. The fellow traveller threw the body into the sea, to be food for the fishes, but the head he dipped into the water, then wrapped it up in his silk handkerchief, and took it with him to the inn.

Next morning he gave the bundle to Hans, telling him not to untie it until the Princess asked what she was thinking of.

There was such a crowd in the King's hall that day that the people were packed as close together as radishes in a bundle. The judges and councillors all sat in their easy chairs, with the white cushions, and the old King had on an entirely new suit of clothes, and his gold crown and his sceptre, too, had been freshly polished, so that he looked quite smart. But the Princess was very pale, and was clad in black, as if she were going to a funeral.

"What are my thoughts like?" asked she of Hans. And he immediately untied the handkerchief, but was himself quite frightened when he saw the hideous head of the magician. And a shudder thrilled through all the bystanders, and the Princess sat mute and motionless as a statue, and could not utter a syllable. At last she rose from her seat, and held out her hand to Hans, in token that he had guessed rightly this third time also. Looking neither at him nor at anyone present, she sighed rather than said, "Now you are my lord! This evening we must be married." "That pleases me," said the old King. "It is just what I wish."

The people cried "Hurrah!" the band played in the streets, the bells were all set ringing, and the women who made cakes took the crape off their sugar men. There were great rejoicings. Three oxen were roasted whole in the marketplace, besides fowls and ducks without end, so that everyone who wanted might come and have dinner. The fountains flowed with wine instead of water, and if you went into the

baker's shop to buy a penny roll, he would give you six buns into the bargain, buns with curiants in them, too

In the evening the whole city was illuminated, the soldiers fired their guns, and the little boys ran about letting off crackers. There was eating and drinking, dancing and jumping, up in the palace. All the fair ladies and gallant cavaliers of the court danced with one another, and you could hear far off the song they sang

“Many pretty maidens skip about and dance,
While on ground their tiny feet scarcely seem to glance
Like spinning wheels they swiftly whirl
Every charming tireless girl
Dance then, pretty maiden, do,
Till the sole falls from your shoe”

Amid all this gaiety the Princess remained pale and sad, and Hans in despair went to his fellow traveller to ask him how to win her love. The fellow traveller gave him a little vial with some drops in it, and also three feathers from the swan wings, bidding him steep each of the three feathers in the liquid and then sprinkle the Princess's forehead with the drops clinging to the feathers. This would destroy the power of the magician and free her from his enchantments.

Hans did exactly as his fellow traveller bade him. He sprinkled the Princess's brow three times with the first feather, and she uttered a loud shriek, and was changed into a coal-black swan with fiery-red eyes. He sprinkled the black swan with the second feather, and it became pure white, but had a black ring round its throat. He shook the drops from the third feather over the white swan's head, and it was at once changed into a lovely Princess. She was lovelier than ever, and, while her eyes sparkled with tears of joy, thanked him for having broken the spell of the magician.

Next morning the old King came with all his Court, and kept on congratulating them till it was quite late in the day.

At last the fellow traveller, his staff in his hand and his knapsack on his back, came to the palace to ask for Hans. Hans kissed him many times, and begged him to stay always

with him and share in his happiness. But the fellow traveller shook his head, saying, very kindly and mildly, "No, that cannot be, my time is up. I have now paid my debt. Do you remember the dead man whom his evil-minded creditors would not have suffered to rest in his coffin? You gave all you had to secure him peace and rest. I am that dead man!"

And in the same moment he was gone.

The bridal festivities lasted for a whole month. Hans and his Princess loved each other dearly, and the good old King lived through many happy days, never happier than when he was dancing his tiny grandchildren on his knees and letting them play with his bright sceptre. But Hans, in the course of time, became king over the whole country.

STORY OF A MOTHER

A MOTHER sat by the bedside of her little child, she was very sad, for she was afraid lest it should die. The child was very pale, its eyes were closed, its breathing was faint, and every now and then it fetched a deep sigh, and the mother's face grew sadder and sadder as she watched the little creature.

There was a knock at the door, and a poor old man wrapped up in a great horse cloth came in. He had need of warm clothing, for it was a cold winter's night. The ground outside was covered with ice and snow, and the wind blew keen and cutting into the wanderer's face.

As the old man was shivering with cold, and the child seemed at that moment to have fallen asleep, the mother rose up and brought for her guest some beer in a little pot, putting it inside the stove to warm. And the old man sat rocking the cradle, and the mother sat down on a chair beside him, still gazing on her sick child, listening anxiously to its hard breathing and holding its tiny hand.

"I shall keep him. Do you not think so?" she enquired. "God is good. He will not take my darling away from me!"

And the old man—it was Death himself—bowed his head so strangely, you could not tell whether he meant to say "Yes" or "No." And the mother cast down her eyes, and tears streamed over her cheeks. She felt her head growing heavy. For three whole days and nights she had not closed her eyes, and now she slept, but only for a minute. Presently she started up, shivering with cold, and looked round the room. The old man was gone, and her little child was gone, he had taken it with him. And yonder, in the corner, the old clock ticked and ticked. It began to strike. The heavy weight sank to the ground and the clock stood still.

But the mother rushed out of the house crying for her child. Outside, amidst the snow, there sat a woman clad in long

STORY OF A MOTHER

black garments, who said, "Death has been in your room, I saw him hurry out of it with your little child. He strides along more swiftly than the wind, and never brings back anything that he has taken away."

"Only tell me which way he has gone," the mother begged. "Tell me the way, and I will find him."

"I know the way," said the woman in the black robes, "but before I show it you, you must first sing to me all the songs you have ever sung to your child. I am Night, and I love these songs. I have heard you sing them many a time, and have seen the tears you shed whilst singing them."

"I will sing them all, every one," said the mother, "but do not keep me now. Let me hasten after Death, let me get back my child."

But Night sat mute and unyielding. Then the mother, weeping and wringing her hands, began to sing. Many were the songs she sang, but more the tears she shed. And at last Night said, "Turn to the right, and go through the dark fir forest, for thither did Death take his way with your child."

Within the wood several roads crossed, and when the woman came to them she knew not in which direction to turn. Here grew a thorn bush without leaves or flowers, for it was winter, and icicles clung to the bare branches.

"Oh! tell me, have you seen Death pass by, bearing my little child with him?"

"Yes, I have," was the thorn tree's reply, "but I will not tell you which way he has gone unless you will first warm me at your bosom. I am freezing to death in this place, I am turning into ice."

And she pressed the thorn bush to her breast so closely as to melt all the icicles. And the thorns pierced into her flesh, and the blood flowed in large drops. But the thorn bush shot forth fresh green leaves, and was crowned with flowers in that same bitter cold winter's night—so warm is the heart of a sorrowing mother! And the thorn bush told her which path she must take.

And the path brought her on to the shore of a large lake where neither ship nor boat was to be seen. The lake was not frozen hard enough to bear her weight, was not shallow enough

to be waded through, and yet cross it she must if she would recover her child. So she lay down, thinking to drink the lake dry. That was quite impossible for one human being to do, but the poor unhappy mother thought that perchance a miracle might come to pass to aid her.

"No, that will never do!" said the lake. "Rather let us see if we cannot come to some agreement. I love to gather pearls, and never have I seen any so bright as your eyes. If you will weep them into my bosom, I will bear you over to the great hothouse where Death dwells and tends his trees and flowers, each of them a human life."

"Oh, what would I not give to get my child!" cried the mother. And she wept yet again, and her eyes fell down into the lake and became two brilliant pearls. And the lake received her, and its bosom heaved and swelled, and its current bore her safely to the opposite shore, where stood a wondrous house many miles in length. No one could tell whether it were a house built with hands, or whether it were a mountain with forests and caverns in its sides. But the poor mother could not see it at all, she had wept out her eyes.

"Where shall I find Death that I may ask him to restore to me my little child?" enquired she.

"He has not yet returned," replied a hoary-haired old woman who was wandering to and fro in Death's hothouse, which she had been left to keep in his absence. "How did you find your way here? Who has helped you?"

"Our Lord has helped me," the mother answered, "He is merciful, and you too will be merciful. Where shall I find my little child?"

"I do not know," said the old woman. "And you, I perceive, cannot see. Many flowers and trees have withered during this past night, Death will come very soon to transplant them. You must know that every human being has his tree or his flower of life, such as is appointed for each. They look like common plants, but their hearts beat. So be of good cheer, perchance you may be able to recognize the heart-beat of your child. But what will you give me if I tell you what else you must do?"

"I have nothing to give," said the mourning mother. "But I will go to the end of the world at your bidding."

"I want nothing from the end of the world," said the old woman, "but you can give me your long black hair. You must know well that it is very beautiful. It pleases me exceedingly. And you can have my white hair in exchange, even that will be better than none."

"Do you wish nothing more than that?" returned the mother. "I will give it you right willingly." And she gave away her beautiful hair, and got in return the thin, snow-white locks of the old woman.

And then they entered Death's vast hothouse, where flowers and trees grew in wonderful order and variety. Here were delicate hyacinths protected by glasses, and great healthy peonies. There grew water-plants, some looking quite fresh, some sickly, water-snakes were twining about them, and black crabs clung fast to their stalks. Here were magnificent palm-trees, oaks, and plantains, under them grew the humble parsley and fragrant thyme. Not a tree, not a flower but had its name—each corresponded with a human life. The persons whose names they bore lived in all countries and nations on the earth: one in China, another in Greenland, and so forth.

There were some large trees planted in little pots, so that their roots were cramped for room and the trees themselves ready to break out from the pots, on the other hand, there was many a weakly, tiny herb set in rich mould, with moss laid over its roots, and the utmost care and attention bestowed upon its preservation.

And the grieving mother bent down over all the tiniest plants. In each one she heard the pulse of human life, and out of a million others she distinguished the heart-throb of her child. "There it is!" cried she, stretching her hand over a little blue crocus flower which was hanging down on one side, sickly and feeble.

"Do not touch the flower," said the old woman, "but place yourself here, and when Death shall come—I expect him every minute—then suffer him not to tear up the plant, but threaten to do the same by some of the other flowers—

that will frighten him, for he will have to answer for it to our Lord. No plant may be rooted up before the Almighty has given permission."

Suddenly an icy-cold chill swept through the hall, and the blind mother felt that Death had arrived.

"How have you found the way hither?" asked he. "How could you arrive here more quickly than I?"

"I am a mother!" was her answer.

And Death extended his long hand towards the tiny, delicate crocus flower—but she held her hands clasped firmly round it—so closely! so closely! and yet with such an increase lest she should touch one of the petals. Then Death breathed upon her hands, and she felt that his breath was more chilling than the coldest, bitterest winter wind, and her hands sunk down, numbed and powerless.

"Against me you have no strength," said Death.

"But our Lord has, and He is merciful," replied she.

"I do but fulfil His will," said Death. "I am His gardener. I take up all His plants and trees, one by one, and transplant them into the glorious garden of paradise—into the unknown land. Where that be, and how they thrive there, that I dare not tell you."

"Oh, give me back my child!" cried the mother, and she wailed and implored. All at once she took firm hold of two pretty flowers, one with each hand, crying, "I will tear off all your flowers, for I am in despair!"

"Touch them not!" said Death. "You say that you are very unhappy, and would you then make another mother as unhappy as yourself?"

"Another mother!" repeated the poor woman, and she at once loosed her hold of both the flowers.

"There are your eyes again," said Death. "I fished them out of the lake, they glistened so brightly, but I did not know that they were yours. Take them back, they are now even brighter than before. Now look down into this deep well. I will tell you the names of the two flowers which you were about to pluck, and you shall see pictured in the well then whole future, the entire course of their human lives. You shall see all that you were about to destroy."

She gazed into the well, and a lovely sight it was to see how one of these lives became a blessing to the whole world, to see what a sunshine of joy and happiness it spread around it. And she beheld the life of the other, and there was sin and sorrow, misfortune and utter misery.

"Both are God's will," said Death.

"Which of them is the flower of unhappiness, and which the blessed and blessing one?" enquired she.

"That I may not tell you," answered Death, "but this shall you learn from me, that one of those two flowers was the flower of your own child. You have seen the destiny, the future of your own child."

Then the mother shrieked out with terror, "Which of the two is my child? Tell me that! Save the innocent child! Release my child from all this misery! Rather bear it away—bear it into God's kingdom! Forget my tears! Forget my entreaties and all that I have done!"

"I do not understand you," said Death. "Will you have your child back again, or shall I carry him away to that place which you know not?"

And the mother wrung her hands, fell upon her knees, and prayed to the All-wise, All-merciful Father, "Hear me not when I pray for what is not Thy will—Thy will is always best! Hear me not, Lord, hear me not!"

And her head drooped upon her breast.

And Death departed, and bore away her child to the unknown land.

THE BELL

EVERY evening, when the sun was setting and the clouds glistened like gold among the high chimneys, in the crowded streets of the town there was heard, sometimes by one, sometimes by another, a strange deep sound like the pealing of a church bell. Only for a moment could it be heard, for there was such continuous rumbling of carts, and noise and cries in the town. "Hark! there is the evening bell," people used to say, "the sun is just setting."

If you went beyond the town to where the houses stood farther apart, with gardens and little fields lying between them, you would see the evening sky still more bright, and hear the bell ringing far more loudly. It seemed as though the sound came from some church deep within the still, fragrant forest, and people could not help casting a glance in that direction, and feeling deeply awed. Now, when a long time had gone by, the people said to one another, "Can there be a church out there in the forest? The tones of the bell are very quaint and very beautiful, why should not we go out there and search into this more closely?" So the rich drove thither, and the poor walked on foot. But they found the way longer than they had expected, and, when they reached the willow grove that grew round the forest, they lay down to rest, and casting their glances on the long branches overhead, believed themselves already in the forest. And soon the town confectioner came out and spread his tent there, and then a rival confectioner came also, who hung up a bell right over his tent. This bell was covered with tar to make it able to withstand the rain, but it had no clapper. So when the people returned home, they declared that they had enjoyed themselves greatly, and that it was all very romantic, quite like a tea-party of ladies.

There were three persons who said they had gone right

through the wood as far as to the other side of the forest, and they declared that in the forest also they had heard the singular tones of the bell; but that when they were there the sound seemed to come from the town. And one man wrote a whole long poem about the bell, and said that it sounded like the voice of a mother speaking to a beloved child, and that there was no melody so sweet as that thrilling, unearthly chime.

The poem caught the notice of the Emperor of that country, and he promised that whoever discovered the cause of this mysterious sound should bear the title of "Universal Bell-ringer", even though it turned out that there was no bell at all.

So, in hopes of gaining this title, a number of persons went rambling all over the forest, but only one came back with any sort of explanation. Not that he went much deeper than the others. He said that the bell-like tones came from a very large owl in a hollow tree. It was the Owl of Wisdom who kept on striking her head against the tree, but whether the sound proceeded from her head or from the hollow trunk, he owned frankly he could not decide. Nevertheless, he was made "Universal Bell-ringer", and published every year a short treatise "On the Owl of Wisdom", but, for all that, people were just about as wise as they were before.

It was a Confirmation day. The preacher had spoken to the children kindly and earnestly, bidding them remember that this day was for them a most important one, that the blessing of God had been invoked upon their heads, that they had now ceased to be children, and become full-grown men and women, that their childish minds, therefore, must now unfold into the maturity of reason. The glorious sunlight shone round them as the newly confirmed walked all together out of the town. Suddenly the unknown bell was heard pealing particularly loudly from the forest. Immediately they were all except three seized with a longing to go into the forest and find out the cause of the sound. One of the three wished to go home to try on her ball dress, indeed, had it not been for the ball, she would not have cared about being confirmed that year. The second was a poor boy

who had borrowed his confirmation coat and boots from the innkeeper's son, and had promised to return them within a fixed time. And as for the third, he declared that he never went to any strange place without his parents, he had always been a good child, and intended to be so still, although he was confirmed, and they ought not to laugh at him for it! Laugh, however, they did, and that right heartily.

So these three went back to the town, whilst the rest trotted on their way. The sun shone, the birds sang, and the newly confirmed sang with them, holding each other by the hands. None of them had yet entered upon the business of life. They were like brothers and sisters, all children of the good God above them.

But very soon two of the youngest became weary, and turned back, and two little girls sat down by the wayside to weave garlands, and they also did not go forward with the rest. When the others reached the willow grove where stood the confectioner's tent, they said to each other, "See, here we are at last! After all, there is really no such thing as the bell, it is only a fancy of ours!" However, in that same moment the bell was heard to peal from out the forest depths, in tones so sweet and solemn that four or five made up their mind to go farther into the wood to seek it.

The trees were thickly covered with leaves, and it was no easy task to make a path through the wood. Anemones and the sweet-scented woodruff grew almost too high, honeysuckles and wild convolvuluses hung in long wreaths from tree to tree, the nightingales sang, and the sunbeams played here and there. Oh! the forest was lovely, though certainly it was no way for girls to go. They would have torn their frocks among the brambles. Several large blocks of stone, covered with lichens of every colour, formed a basin whence a fountain of fresh spring water gushed merrily forth, with a strange, gurgling "gluck, gluck!" "What if this should be the bell?" said one of the just confirmed, and he laid himself down on the ground to listen. "I must examine into this thoroughly," he thought. So there he stayed, and let the others go on their way.

They came to a cottage built with bark and boughs. A large

tree bearing wild crab apples leaned over it, as though to shower down its rich blessing over the roof. A rose bush was trained up the front wall, its green leaves and bright-red flowers clustering thickly round the gable end, and just under this gable end hung a little bell. Could this be the bell they sought? Yes, all agreed that it was, excepting one, who said it was far too small, and its tones too low to have been heard at such a distance, and that the chimes which had stirred the hearts of all men so powerfully were indeed very different. He who spoke thus was a King's son, so the others said, "That is always the way. These grand folks must needs be wiser than all the rest of the world put together."

So they suffered him to go on alone, and as he wandered on he felt his spirit more and more possessed with the silent beauty of the forest. He could still hear the ringing of the little bell whose sight had so delighted his comrades, and at times, too, the wind bore to him the tones of the confectioner's bell, as it rang the holiday-makers to tea, but the deep, solemn strokes that had called him forth from the town sounded above them all, growing louder and louder, and more and more like the music of an organ. The sound of the bell ringing came from the left hand, from the side where the heart lies.

Suddenly there was a rustling among the bushes, and beside the King's son stood a little boy wearing wooden shoes and a jacket with sleeves so short as to leave his wrists quite bare. They knew one another. It was the boy who could not come with the rest in search of the bell, because he had first to go home, to return at the proper time the frockcoat and boots to the innkeeper's son. This he had done, and had then followed alone in his own wooden shoes and miserable patched garments, for the bell rang with a melody so clear and deep that he felt he must come and seek it.

"Well, then, we can go on together," said the King's son. But the poor boy in the wooden shoes was very bashful. He tugged at his short jacket sleeves, and said he feared he could not walk so quickly. Besides, he thought that the bell must be sought towards the right, because the right hand side was always the place of honour.

"Certainly, then, we shall not agree at all," replied the King's son, and he nodded a friendly farewell to the poor boy, who went on into the deepest and thickest parts of the wood, where the thorns tore his clothes to pieces and made his face, hands, and feet bleed terribly. The King's son, on his part, did not escape without a few sharp scratches, but the sun shone full on his path. And he it is whom we shall follow. A royal heart, indeed, had this King's son.

"The bell I must and will find," said he, "even should I have to go to the end of the world after it!"

Ugly grinning monkeys sat chattering and grinding their teeth among the branches. "Shall we cudgel him?" cried they. "Shall we thrash him? He is a King's son."

But he went on cheerfully deeper and deeper into the forest, where grew the most strangely lovely flowers. Large white lilies with blood-red stamens, and sky-blue tulips, waving to and fro in the wind, sprang up at his feet, and apple trees offered him their tempting fruit, which shone like great glistening soap bubbles in the sunshine. Here and there were spots of the freshest green, where hart and hind sported together under magnificent oaks and beeches, and if the trunks of some of these were cleft, grass and long creepers grew in the cleft. There were great stretches of wood with still lakes on which white swans were swimming, or were beating the water with their wings. The King's son often stood still to listen, often he thought that the bell-like tones must come from the depths of one of these unruffled lakes. But he soon saw that the sound did not come from there, for he still heard the pealing of the bell from some distant region of the forest. At last the sun set, the sky glowed as if on fire, the forest seemed more silent, more sacred than ever, he sank upon his knees, sang his evening hymn, and when it was ended said to himself, "Never shall I find what I seek! The sun is setting. Night, dark night, is coming on. I would fain see the round, red sun once more before it sinks beneath the earth. I will climb up yonder group of rocks, the centre is as high as the tallest tree." And, seizing hold of roots and shrubs, he clambered over the moist stones, where water-snakes lay writhing their long, smooth coils, and toads sat

croaking at him. Up he-clambered, and gained the peak just before the sun, as seen from that height, had quite disappeared. Oh, what a scene now burst upon his eyes! The sea—the great, glorious sea—was spread before him, dashing its foaming billows on the coast, and the half-set sun shone like a rich golden altar where sea and sky met, melting into each other, into the same glowing hues. The forest sang, and his heart sang with it. All nature seemed one vast and holy church, of which the trees, crowned by light, hovering clouds, were the arched pillars, the flowers and grass the soft woven carpet, and the heavens themselves formed the spacious dome overhead. And, as he gazed, the bright-red hues faded rapidly away. The sun had quite vanished, but, one by one, millions of stars burst out, just as though millions of diamond lamps had been suddenly lit. The King's son raised his arms in grateful rapture towards heaven, sea, and forest, and just at that moment the poor youth in wooden shoes and the short jacket came forward from the right-hand side, following his own path, he had in the end been brought to the same spot. They ran to meet each other, and stood together, hand in hand, in the vast church of nature and poetry, whilst above them pealed the holy, invisible bell, and blessed spirits hovered round, singing in chorus their own triumphant hallelujah!

THE LITTLE MERMAID

FAR out at sea, where the water is blue as the loveliest cornflower and clear as the purest crystal, where it is so deep that no cable can fathom it, and that very, very many church towers would need to be heaped one upon another to reach from the bottom to the top, dwell the Sea King and his subjects

We must not think that at the bottom of the sea there is only bare yellow sand. The most wonderful flowers and plants grow there. They have leaves and stems so pliant that the slightest motion of the water makes them stir as if they were alive. Between the branches glide fishes large and small, just as birds fly among the trees on land.

Where the water is deepest stands the palace of the Sea King. Its walls are of coral, and its high, pointed windows are of amber, while its roof is made of mussel shells, which, as the billows pass over them, are continually opening and shutting. This looks exceedingly pretty, especially as each of these shells contains a number of bright, glittering pearls, one only of which would be the most costly ornament in the crown of a king in the upper world.

The Sea King, who lived in this palace, had been for many years a widower, and his old mother managed the household affairs for him. She was, on the whole, a sensible sort of old lady, although extremely proud of her high birth and station, on which account she wore twelve oysters on her tail, whilst the other inhabitants of the sea, even those of distinction, were allowed only six. In every other respect she merited very great praise, especially for the affection she showed to the six little princesses, her granddaughters. These were all very beautiful children. The youngest, however, was the most lovely. Her skin was as soft and delicate as a rose leaf, and her eyes were of as deep a blue

as the sea. But, like all other mermaids, she had no feet—her body ended in a tail like that of a fish.

The whole day long the children used to play in the large rooms of the palace, where beautiful flowers grew out of the walls on all sides around them. When the great amber windows were opened, fish would swim in as swallows fly into our rooms. But the fish were bolder than the swallows, they swam right up to the little princesses, ate from their hands, and allowed themselves to be patted.

In front of the palace there was a large garden, full of fiery-red and dark-blue trees whose fruit glittered like gold, and whose flowers were like flames of fire. The sand that formed the soil of the garden was of a bright blue colour, something like the flames of sulphur. And a strangely beautiful blue was spread over the whole, so that you might have fancied yourself raised very high in the air, with the sky at once above and below you, certainly not at the bottom of the sea. When the waters were quite still, the sun might be seen looking like a purple flower, out of whose calyx streamed the light.

Each of the little princesses had her own plot in the garden, where she might plant and sow at her pleasure. One chose to have hers made in the shape of a whale, another preferred for hers the figure of a mermaid, but the youngest had hers made quite round like the sun, and planted in it only those flowers that were red—the colour of the sun as it appeared to her.

She was certainly a strange child, very quiet and thoughtful. Whilst her sisters were delighted with all sorts of fine things that had come out of the wrecks of vessels, she asked for nothing but a beautiful white marble statue of a boy, which had fallen to the bottom of the sea from one of these wrecks. She put the statue in her garden, and planted a red weeping willow by its side. The tree grew up quickly, and let its long boughs fall upon the bright blue ground, where ever-moving shadows played in violet hues, as if boughs and root were embracing.

Nothing pleased the little princess more than to hear about the world of human beings living above the sea. She made

her old grandmother tell her all she knew about the ships, the towns, the men, and the animals, and she was greatly pleased when she heard that the flowers of the upper world had a sweet smell (for the flowers of the sea are scentless), and that the woods were green, and that the fish fluttering among the branches were of various gay colours, and could sing with a loud clear voice. The old lady meant birds, but she called them fish, because her grandchildren, having never seen a bird, would not otherwise have understood her.

"When you are fifteen," added she, "you will be allowed to rise to the surface of the sea. You will then sit by moonlight in the clefts of the rocks, see the ships sail by, and learn what towns and men are."

The next year the eldest of the sisters reached this happy age, and she promised to tell the others of everything she might see, for the grandmother gave them but little information, and there was so much that they wished to know.

But none of all the sisters longed so much for her fifteenth birthday as the youngest—she who had longest to wait, and was so quiet and thoughtful. Many a night she stood by the open window, looking up through the clear blue water. She could see the sun and the moon. If a shadow passed over them, she knew it must be either a whale or a ship sailing by full of human beings, who little thought that, far beneath them, a little mermaid was longingly stretching forth her white hands towards their ship's keel.

When the eldest sister came back from her first visit she had a thousand things to talk about. Her chief pleasure had been to sit upon a sandbank in the moonlight, looking at the large town which lay on the coast, where lights were beaming like stars, and where music was playing. She had heard the noise of carriages, and the voices of human beings. She had seen the high church towers, and listened to the ringing of the bells, and just because she could not go there she longed the more after all these things.

How keenly did her youngest sister listen to her words! And when she next stood at night by her open window, gazing upward through the blue waters, she thought so

intensely of the great noisy city that she fancied she could hear the church bells ringing

Next year the second sister received permission to swim wherever she pleased. She rose to the surface of the sea just when the sun was setting, and this sight so delighted her that she declared it to be more beautiful than anything else she had seen above the waters.

"The whole sky seemed tinged with gold," said she, "and it is impossible for me to describe to you the beauty of the clouds. Now red, now violet, they glided over me, but still more swiftly flew over the water a flock of white swans, just where the sun was sinking. I looked after them, but the sun sank out of sight, and the bright rosy light on the surface of the sea and on the edges of the clouds faded slowly away."

The third sister was the boldest, and when her turn to visit the upper world came she swam up a broad river. There she saw green hills covered with woods and vineyards, from among which arose houses and castles. She heard the birds singing, and the sun shone with so much power that she had again and again to plunge below in order to cool her burning face. In a little bay she came upon a number of children, who were bathing and jumping about. She would have joined in their gambols, but the children fled back to land in great terror, and a little black animal barked at her in such a way that she herself was frightened at last and swam back to the sea. She could not, however, forget the green woods, the verdant hills, and the pretty children, who, although they had no fins, were swimming about in the river so fearlessly.

The fourth sister was not so bold, she stayed in the open sea, and said on her return home she thought nothing could be more beautiful. She had seen ships sailing by, but so far off that they looked like sea-gulls, she had watched the merry dolphins gambolling in the water, and the great whales sending up into the air a thousand sparkling fountains.

The birthday of the fifth sister was in winter, so when she rose to the surface the sea was of a green colour, and large icebergs were floating on it. These, she said, looked like

pearls, though they were much larger than the church towers in the land of human beings. She sat down upon one of the icebergs, and let the wind play with her long hair, but then all the ships hoisted their sails in terror, and got away from the neighbourhood as quickly as possible. In the evening the sky was covered with clouds, and whilst the great mountains of ice rose and sank and rose again, and beamed with a reddish glow, flashes of lightning burst forth from the clouds, and the thunder rolled on, peal after peal. The sails of all the ships were instantly furlled, and horror and affright reigned on board, but she sat still on the iceberg, looking quietly at the blue zigzag of the flashes.

On her first visit to the upper world each of these sisters was greatly taken by the sight of so many new and beautiful objects, but the novelty was soon over, and it was not long before her home seemed the pleasanter place, for there only did she find everything to her mind.

Many an evening would the five sisters rise hand in hand from the depths of the ocean. Their voices were far sweeter than any human voice, and when a storm was coming on they would swim in front of the ships and sing,—oh, how sweetly did they sing! describing the happiness of those who lived at the bottom of the sea, and entreating the sailors not to be afraid, but to come down to them. The sailors, however, did not understand, they thought the song was only the whistling of the wind. Besides, these things could never matter to them, for if the vessel went down, the men would be drowned, and only their dead bodies would reach the palace of the Sea King.

Whilst her sisters were swimming at evening time, the youngest would remain motionless and alone, in her father's palace, looking up after them. She would have wept, but mermaids cannot weep, and therefore, when they are troubled, suffer more than human beings do.

"Oh, if I were but fifteen!" sighed she, "I know I should love the upper world and the people who live in it so much."

At last the time she had so longed for came.

"Well, now it is your turn," said the grandmother. "Come here that I may adorn you like your sisters." And she wound

round her hair a wreath of white lilies, whose every flower leaf was the half of a pearl. Then she ordered eight large oysters to fasten themselves to the Princess's tail, in token of her high rank.

"But that is so very uncomfortable!" said the little mermaid.

"One must not mind slight troubles when one wishes to look her best," said the old lady.

How willingly would the Princess have given up all this splendour, and exchanged her heavy crown for the red flowers of her garden, which were so much more becoming to her! But she dared not do so. "Farewell," said she, and she swam away, light as a flake of foam.

When she reached the surface the sun had just set, the clouds were gleaming with golden and rosy hues, the evening star was shining in the pale western sky, the air was mild and fresh, and the sea as smooth as glass. A large ship with three masts lay on the still waters. Many flags were fluttering from the masts, but one sail only was set. Not a breath was stirring, and the sailors were idly seated in the rigging or on the deck of the vessel. There was music and song on board, and after it grew dark hundreds of lamps all of a sudden burst forth into light.

The little mermaid swam close up to the cabin windows, and every now and then, when she was lifted up by the motion of the water, she could look through the clear window-panes. She saw within many richly dressed men. The handsomest among them was a young prince with large black eyes. He was just sixteen years old, and all on board were keeping his birthday with a grand festival. The sailors were dancing on the deck, and when the young Prince came among them on the deck a hundred rockets were sent up into the air, turning night into day, and so frightening the little mermaid that she plunged beneath the water. She soon raised her little head again, however, and then it seemed as if all the stars were falling down upon her. Such a fiery shower she had never seen before—never had she heard that men possessed such wonderful powers. Large suns spurted forth flames, bright fish swam through the air, and everything was

reflected perfectly in the still, clear sea beneath. It was so light in the ship that everything could be seen distinctly. Oh, how happy the young Prince was! He shook hands with the sailors, and laughed and jested with them, whilst sweet notes of music mingled with the silence of night.

It was now late, but the little mermaid could not tear herself away from the ship and the handsome young Prince. She remained looking through the cabin windows, rocked to and fro by the waves. There was a foaming and boiling in the depths beneath, and the ship began to move on, so the sails were spread. Then the waves rose high, thick clouds gathered over the sky, the noise of distant thunder was heard, and the sailors, seeing that a storm was coming on, again furled the sails. The great vessel was tossed about on the stormy waves like a light boat, and the waves rose to a great height, towering over the ship, which now sank beneath and now rose above them. To the little mermaid this seemed most delightful, but the ship's crew thought very differently. The ship groaned and creaked, the stout masts bent under the lashing of the billows, the planks gave way, and the waters rushed in. For a minute the ship trembled from stem to stern, then the mainmast broke, as if it had been a reed, the ship turned over, and was filled with water. The little mermaid now understood that the people on the ship were in danger, for she herself was forced to beware of the beams and splinters torn from the vessel and floating about on the waves. But it became pitch dark so that she could not distinguish anything. Presently, however, a dreadful flash of lightning lit up for her the whole of the wreck. Her eyes sought the young Prince, but the ship suddenly sank to the bottom. At first she was delighted, thinking that the Prince must now come to her abode, but she soon remembered that man cannot live in water, and that therefore if the Prince ever entered her palace, it would be as a corpse.

"Die! No, he must not die!" She swam through the wreckage with which the water was strewn, heedless of danger, and at last found the Prince all but worn out, and hardly able to keep his head above water. He had already closed his eyes, and would have been drowned had not the

little mermaid come to his rescue. She took hold of him and kept him above water, letting the current bear them on together.

In the morning the storm was over, but of the ship there was not a trace left. Like a flame of fire the sun rose out of the sea, and its beams seemed to give back their colour to the Prince's cheeks, but his eyes still remained shut. The little mermaid kissed his smooth forehead and stroked back the wet hair from his face. He looked to her like the marble statue in her garden. She kissed him again and wished fervently that he might recover.

Soon she saw the dry land with its lofty blue mountains glittering with snow. A green wood stretched along the coast, and at the edge of the wood stood a chapel or convent, she could not be sure which. Citron and lemon trees grew in the garden round it, and an avenue of tall palm trees led up to the door. The sea here formed a little bay, in which the water was quite smooth but very deep, and under the cliffs there were dry, firm sands. Hither swam the little mermaid with the seemingly dead Prince. She laid him upon the warm sand, and took care to place his head high, and to turn his face to the sun.

The bells began to ring in the large white building that stood before her, and a number of young gulls came out to walk in the garden. The mermaid swam away from the shore, hid herself behind some stones, covered her head with foam so that her little face could not be seen, and watched the Prince.

It was not long before one of the young gulls approached. She seemed quite frightened at finding the Prince in this state, apparently dead. Soon, however, she recovered herself, and ran back to call her sisters. The little mermaid saw that the Prince revived, and that all around smiled kindly and joyfully upon him. For her, however, he did not look—he did not know that it was she who had saved him. And when the Prince was taken into the house, she felt so sad that she at once plunged beneath the water and went back to her father's palace.

If she had been quiet and thoughtful before, she now grew



"SHE LAID HIM UPON THE WARM SAND"

still more so. Her sisters asked her what she had seen in the upper world, but she made no answer.

Many an evening she rose to the place where she had left the Prince. She saw the snow on the mountains melt, the fruit in the garden ripen, but the Prince she never saw, so she always went back home sorrowful. Her only pleasure was to sit in her little garden gazing on the beautiful statue that was so like the Prince. She cared no longer for her flowers, they grew up in wild luxuriance, covered the steps, and entwined their long stems and tendrils among the boughs of the trees, so that her whole garden became a bower.

At last, being unable to hide her sorrow any longer, she told the secret to one of her sisters, who told it to the other princesses, and they in turn to some of their friends. Among them was a young mermaid who recollected the Prince, having been herself an eyewitness of the festivities in the ship, she knew also in what country the Prince lived, and the name of his king.

"Come, little sister!" said the Princesses, and, embracing her, they rose together arm in arm out of the water, just in front of the Prince's palace.

This palace was built of bright yellow stones. A flight of white marble steps led from it down to the sea. A gilded cupola rose above the roof of the building, and white marble figures, which might almost have been taken for real men and women, were placed among the pillars surrounding it. Through the clear glass of the high windows one might look into splendid rooms hung with silken curtains. The walls of these rooms were adorned with beautiful paintings. It was a real treat to the little royal mermaids to see such a splendid dwelling. They gazed through the windows of one of the largest rooms, and in the centre saw a fountain playing, whose waters sprang up so high as to reach the glittering cupola above, through which the sunbeams fell, dancing on the water and brightening the pretty plants which grew around it.

The little mermaid now knew where her beloved Prince dwelt, and henceforth she went there almost every evening. She often approached nearer the land than her sisters, and

tured, and even swam up the narrow channel that flowed under the marble balcony. Here on a bright moonlight night she would watch the young Prince when he believed himself to be quite alone.

Sometimes she saw him sailing on the water in a gaily painted boat with many coloured flags waving above him. She would then hide among the green reeds that grew on the banks, and listen to his voice.

Many a night, when the fishermen were casting their nets by the beacon's light, she heard them talking of the Prince and telling of the noble deeds he had done. She was then very happy, thinking how she had saved his life and remembering how his head had rested on her bosom, and how she had kissed him when he knew nothing of it and could never even dream of such a thing.

Human beings became more and more dear to her every day, she wished that she were one of them. Then would seemed to her much larger than that of the sea people. They could sail over the ocean in their ships as well as climb to the summits of those high mountains that rose above the clouds, and their woods and fields stretched far farther than the mermaid's eyes could reach.

There were many things that she wished to know, but her sisters could not give her any clear information. So she had again to ask the old queen mother, who knew a great deal about the upper world, which she used to call the country above the sea.

"Do men when they are not drowned live for ever?" she asked one day. "Do they not die as we do, who live at the bottom of the sea?"

"Yes," was the grandmother's reply, "they must die like us, and their life is much shorter than ours. We live to the age of three hundred years, but when we die we become foam on the sea, and are not allowed even to share a grave among those that are dear to us. We have no immortal souls, we can never live again, and are like the grass which, when once cut down, is withered for ever. Human beings, on the contrary, have souls that continue to live when their bodies become dust, and as we rise out of the water to admire the

abode of man, they rise up to glorious unknown dwellings in the skies which we shall never see"

"Why have not *we* immortal souls?" asked the little mermaid "I would willingly give up my three hundred years to be a human being for only one day, if I might thus gain the right to enter that heavenly world above"

"You must not think of that," answered her grandmother, "it is much better as it is We live longer and are far happier than human beings"

"So I must die, and be dashed like foam over the sea, never to rise again and hear the gentle murmur of the ocean, never again to see the beautiful flowers and the bright sun! Tell me, dear grandmother, is there nothing I can do by which I may gain an immortal soul?"

"No," replied the old lady "It is true that if you could so win the love of a human being as to become dearer to him than either father or mother, if he loved you with all his heart, and promised whilst the priest joined his hands with yours to be always faithful to you, then his soul would flow into yours, and you would then become a partaker of human bliss But that can never be, for what in our eyes is the most beautiful part of our body, the tail, the inhabitants of the earth think hideous They cannot bear it To appear handsome to them, the body must have two clumsy props which they call legs"

The little mermaid sighed and looked mournfully at the scaly part of her form, otherwise so fair and delicate

"We are happy," added the old lady, "we may jump and swim about merrily for three hundred years That is a long time, and afterwards we shall repose peacefully in death This evening we have a court ball"

The ball of which the queen mother spoke was far more splendid than any that earth has ever seen The walls of the hall were of crystal, very thick, but yet very clear Hundreds of large mussel shells were planted in rows along them, some of rose-colour, some green as grass, but all sending forth a bright light, which not only lit brightly the whole room, but also shone through the glassy walls into the waters around for a great space, making the scales of the number-

less fish, great and small, crimson and purple, silver and gold-coloured, appear more brilliant than ever. Through the centre of the saloon flowed a bright, clear stream, on the surface of which danced mermen and mermaids to the melody of their own sweet voices.

The little Princess sang more sweetly than any of the others, and they clapped their hands and applauded her. She was pleased at this, for she knew well that there was neither on earth nor in the sea a more beautiful voice than hers. But her thoughts soon went back to the world above her: she could not forget the handsome Prince, she could not help being sorry at not having an immortal soul. She stole away from her father's palace, and whilst all was joy within, she sat alone lost in thought in her little neglected garden. On a sudden she heard the tones of horns resounding over the water far away in the distance, and she said to herself: "Now he is going out to hunt, he whom I love more than my father and mother. All, all will I risk to win him—and an immortal soul! Whilst my sisters are still dancing in the palace, I will go to the sea witch whom I have hitherto feared so much, but who is the only person who can advise and help me."

So the little mermaid left the garden, and took her way to the foaming whirlpool beyond which dwelt the sea witch. She had never been this way before. Neither flowers nor sea-grass bloomed along her path. She had to cross over a stretch of bare grey sand till she reached the whirlpool, where the waters were eddying and whirling like mill-wheels, tearing everything they could seize along with them into the depths below. She had to make her way through this dreadful place to get to the territory of the enchantress. Then she had to pass through a boiling, slimy bog, which the enchantress called her tuf-moor. The witch's house stood in a wood beyond this, and a strange abode it was. All the trees and bushes around were polypi—half animal, half plant—looking like hundred-headed serpents shooting up out of the ground. Their branches were long slimy arms with fingers like worms, every member, from the root to the uttermost tip, ceaselessly moving and stretching forth on all sides. Whatever they

seized they fastened upon so that it could not loosen itself from their grasp. The little mermaid stood still for a minute looking at this horrible wood. Her heart beat with fear, and she would certainly have gone back without seeing the witch, had she not thought of the Prince—and of the human soul for which she longed. The thought gave her new courage. She bound up her long waving hair that the polypi might not catch hold of it, crossed her delicate arms over her bosom; and, swifter than a fish can glide through the water, she passed these unsightly trees, and they stretched their eager arms after her in vain. She could not, however, help seeing that every polypus had something in his grasp, held as firmly by a thousand little arms as if clasped by iron bands. There were the whitened skeletons of human beings who had been drowned, skeletons of land animals, oars, helms, and sea-chests grasped tightly in their clinging arms, and even a little mermaid whom they had seized and strangled! What a fearful sight for the poor little Princess!

When she got through this wood of horrors she came to a slimy place, where great fat snails were crawling about, and in the midst of it stood a house built of the bones of people who had been shipwrecked. Here sat the sea witch fondling a toad in the same way as some persons pet a bird. The ugly fat snails she called her chickens, and she let them crawl all about her.

"I know well what you would ask of me," said she to the little Princess. "Your wish is foolish enough, yet it shall be fulfilled, though its fulfilment is sure to bring great grief to you, my fairest Princess. You wish to get rid of your fish's tail, and to have instead of it two props like those of human beings, so that the young Prince may fall in love with you, and you may gain an immortal soul. Is not that so?" And then the sea witch laughed so loudly and unpleasantly that she shook all over, and her toad and her snails fell to the ground and lay there wriggling about. "You come just at the right time," continued she. "Had you come after sunset it would not have been in my power to help you for another year. You must swim to land, and sit down upon the shore and swallow a draught which I will prepare for you.

Your tail will then disappear and shrink up into the things men call legs. This will, however, be very painful, you will feel as though a sharp knife passed through your body. All who look on you after you have been thus changed will say that you are the loveliest child they have ever seen. You will retain your graceful movements, and no dancer will move so lightly, but every step you take will cause you pain all but unbearable. It will seem to you as though you were walking on the sharp edges of swords, and that your blood must flow. Can you bear all this? If so, I will help you."

"Yes, I will," answered the Princess, with a faltering voice, for she remembered her dear Prince and the immortal soul which her suffering might win.

"Only consider," said the witch, "that you can never again become a mermaid when once you have received a human form. You can never return to your sisters and to your father's palace, and, unless you shall win the Prince's love so that he shall leave father and mother for you, and that you shall be mixed up with all his thoughts and wishes, and unless the priest join your hands so that you become man and wife, you will never obtain the immortality you seek. The morrow of the day on which he is united to another will see your death, your heart will break with sorrow, and you will be changed to foam on the sea."

"Still I will venture!" said the little mermaid, pale and trembling as a dying person.

"Besides all this, I must be paid, and it is no slight thing that I require for my trouble. You have the sweetest voice of all the dwellers in the sea, and you think by its means to charm the Prince, this voice, however, I demand as my recompense. The best thing you possess I require in exchange for my magic drink, for I shall be obliged to sacrifice my own blood in order to give it the sharpness of a two-edged sword."

"But if you take my voice from me," said the Princess, "what have I left with which to charm the Prince?"

"Your graceful form," replied the witch, "your modest gait, and speaking eyes. With such as these it will surely be easy for you to enchain a human heart. Well now, have

you lost courage? Put out your little tongue, that I may cut it off and take it in return for my magic drink."

"Be it so!" said the Princess, and the witch took up her cauldron in order to mix the potion. "Cleanliness is a good thing," said she, as she began to rub the cauldron with a handful of toads and snails. She then scratched her own bosom, and let the black blood trickle down into the cauldron. As she kept on every moment putting something new into the cauldron, the smoke from the mixture assumed horrible forms, and a moaning and groaning proceeded from it. The magic drink at length became as clear and transparent as pure water. It was ready.

"Here it is!" said the witch to the Princess, cutting out her tongue at the same moment. The poor little mermaid was now dumb, she could neither sing nor speak.

"If the polypi should attempt to seize you as you pass through my little grove," said the witch, "you have only to sprinkle some of this magic drink over them, and then arms will burst into a thousand pieces." But the Princess had no need of this counsel, for the polypi drew hastily back as soon as they perceived the bright phial that glittered in her hand like a star, so she passed safely through the fearful wood, over the moor, and across the foaming whirlpool.

She saw that the torches in the ballroom of her father's palace were no longer burning, and that all within were asleep, but she did not dare to go in. Now that she was dumb and about to leave them for ever, she felt as if her heart would break. She stole into the garden, and plucked a flower from the flower-bed of each of her sisters, and then, having kissed her hand many times towards the palace, she rose up through the dark blue waters.

The sun had not yet risen when she came in sight of the Prince's palace and climbed up those well-known marble steps. The moon still shone in the sky when the little mermaid drank the wonderful draught contained in her phial. She felt it run through her like a sharp knife, and she fell down in a swoon. When the sun rose, she awoke and felt a burning pain in all her limbs, but she saw standing close to her the handsome young Prince. His coal-black eyes were fixed so earnestly

upon her that she cast down her own and saw, instead of the long fish-like tail she had hitherto borne, as pretty a pair of slender legs and of tiny feet as any little maiden could have. But she had no clothes, so she wrapped herself up with her long thick hair. The Prince asked who she was, and how she had got there, and she, in reply, smiled and gazed upon him with her bright blue eyes, for alas! she could not speak. He then led her by the hand into the palace. As she went she felt as though she were walking on the edges of sharp swords, but she bore the pain willingly. On she passed, light as a zephyr, and all who saw her wondered at her light, graceful movements.

When she entered the palace, rich clothes of muslin and silk were brought to her. She was lovelier than all who dwelt there, but she could neither speak nor sing. Some female slaves, gaily dressed in silk and gold brocade, sang before the Prince and his royal parents, and one of them had a very clear, sweet voice. The Prince applauded her by clapping his hands, and this made the little mermaid very sad, for she knew that she used to sing far better than the young slave. "Alas!" thought she, "if he did but know that for his sake I have given away my voice for ever."

The slaves began to dance some pretty fairy-like dances to the sound of beautiful music. Then the lovely little mermaid arose and, stretching out her delicate white arms, hovered gracefully about the room. Every motion made more and more manifest the perfect grace and symmetry of her figure, and the expression which beamed in her speaking eyes touched the hearts of the spectators far more than the song of the slaves.

All present were enchanted, but especially the young Prince, who called her his dear little foundling. And she danced again and again, although every step cost her almost unbearable pain. The Prince then said she should always be with him, and a sleeping-place was prepared for her on velvet cushions in the ante-room of his own apartment.

The Prince caused a page's dress to be made for her, that she might accompany him on horseback. So together they rode through the fragrant woods, where the green boughs

brushed against their shoulders, and the birds sang merrily among the fresh leaves. With him she climbed up steep mountains, and although her tender feet bled, she only smiled, and followed her dear Prince to the heights, whence beneath them they could see the clouds chasing each other like a flock of birds migrating to other countries.

During the night she used, when all in the palace were at rest, to walk down the marble steps in order to cool her feet in the deep waters. She would then think of those beloved ones who dwelt under the sea.

One night, as she was thus bathing her feet, her sisters swam together to the spot, arm in arm and singing, but alas! very mournfully. She beckoned to them, and they immediately recognized her, and told her how great was the mourning in her father's house for her loss. After this the sisters visited her every night, and once they brought with them the old grandmother, who had not seen the upper world for a great many years. They also brought their father, the Sea King, with his crown on his head, but these two old people did not venture near enough to land to be able to speak to her.

The little mermaiden became dearer and dearer to the Prince every day, but he only looked upon her as a sweet, gentle child, and the thought of making her his wife never entered his head. And yet his wife she must be ere she could receive an immortal soul, his wife she must be, or she would change into foam, and be driven restlessly over the billows of the sea!

"Do you not love me above all others?" her eyes asked, as he pressed her fondly in his arms and kissed her lovely brow.

"Yes," the Prince would say, "you are dearer to me than any other, for no one is as good as you are! You love me so much, and you are so like a young maiden whom I have seen but once, and may never see again. I was on board a ship which was wrecked by a sudden tempest, the waves threw me on the shore, near a holy temple, where a number of young girls are occupied constantly with religious services. The youngest of them found me on the shore and saved my life. I saw her only once, but her image is vividly impressed upon

my memory, and her alone can I love. But she belongs to the holy temple, and you who resemble her so much have been given to me for consolation. Never will we be parted!"

"Alas! he does not know that it was I who saved his life," thought the little mermaiden, sighing deeply. "I bore him over the wild waves, into the wooded bay where the temple stands. I sat behind the rocks waiting till someone should come to help him. I saw the pretty maiden whom he loves better than me." Again she sighed deeply, for she could not weep. "He said that she belongs to the temple, so she never comes out into the world, and they can never again meet each other, while I am always with him, and see him every day. I will take care of him and love him, and if need be give up my life for his sake."

"The Prince is going to be married to the beautiful daughter of the neighbouring King," said the courtiers, "that is why he is having that splendid ship fitted out. It is said that he wishes to travel, but in reality he goes to see the Princess. A great company is to go with him." The little mermaiden smiled at these and similar guesses, for she knew the Prince's thoughts better than anyone else.

"I must go," he said to her, "I must see the beautiful Princess, my parents require me to do so, but they will not compel me to marry her and bring her home as my bride. And it is quite impossible for me to love her, for she cannot be so like the beautiful girl in the temple as you are, and if I were obliged to choose, I should prefer you, my little silent foundling with the speaking eyes." And he kissed her rosy lips, played with her locks, and folded her in his arms, whereupon arose in her heart a sweet vision of human happiness and immortal bliss.

"You are not afraid of the sea, are you, my sweet, silent child?" asked he tenderly, as they stood together in the splendid ship which was to take them to the country of the neighbouring King. And then he told her of the storms that sometimes agitate the waters, of the strange fishes that inhabit the deep, and of the wonderful things seen by divers. But she smiled at his words, for she knew better than any child of earth what went on in the depths of the ocean.

At night, when the moon shone brightly, and when all on board were fast asleep, she sat on the ship's deck, looking down into the sea. It seemed to her, as she gazed through the foamy track made by the ship's keel, that she saw her father's palace and her grandmother's silver crown. She then saw her sisters rise out of the water, looking sorrowful and stretching out their hands towards her. She nodded to them, smiled, and would have explained that everything was going on quite according to her wishes, but just then the cabin-boy approached, upon which the sisters plunged beneath the water so suddenly that the boy thought what he had seen on the waves was nothing but foam.

The next morning the ship entered the harbour of the neighbouring King's splendid capital. Bells were rung, trumpets sounded, and soldiers marched in procession through the city, with waving banners and glittering bayonets. Every day witnessed some new entertainments, balls and parties followed each other. The Princess, however, was not yet in the town, she had been sent to a distant convent for education, and had there been taught the practice of all royal virtues. At last she arrived at the palace.

"It is herself!" cried the Prince when they met, "it is she who saved my life when I lay like a corpse on the seashore!" and he pressed his blushing bride to his beating heart.

"Oh, I am all too happy!" said he to his dumb foundling. "What I never dared to hope for has come to pass. You must rejoice in my happiness, for you love me more than all the others who surround me." And the little mermaid kissed his hand in silent sorrow.

Again the church bells rang, and bride and bridegroom joined hands whilst the holy words that united them were spoken. The little mermaid, clad in silk and cloth of gold, stood behind the Princess and held the train of the bridal dress, but her ear heard nothing of the solemn music, her eye saw not the holy ceremony. She remembered her approaching end, she remembered that she had lost both this world and the next.

That very same evening bride and bridegroom went on

board the ship, cannons were fired, flags waved in the breeze, and in the centre of the deck stood a magnificent pavilion of purple and cloth of gold fitted up with the richest and softest couches. Here the princely pair were to spend the night. A favourable wind swelled the sails, and the ship glided lightly over the blue waters.

As soon as it was dark, coloured lamps were hung out, and dancing began on the deck. The little mermaid was thus reminded of what she had seen the first time she rose to the upper world. The spectacle now was equally splendid—and she was obliged to join in the dance, hovering lightly as a bird over the ship boards. All present cheered with wonder and delight, for never had she danced with more enchanting grace. Her little feet suffered extremely, but she no longer felt the pain, the anguish her heart suffered was much greater. It was the last evening she might see him for whose sake she had forsaken her home and her family, had given away her beautiful voice, and suffered daily the most violent pain—all without his having the least suspicion of it. It was the last evening that she might breathe the air in which he, the beloved one, lived, the last evening she might behold the deep blue sea and the starry heavens. An eternal night, in which she might neither think nor dream, awaited her. And all was joy in the ship, and she, her heart filled with thoughts of death, smiled and danced with the others till past midnight. Then the Prince kissed his lovely bride, and arm in arm they entered the magnificent tent prepared for them.

All was now still. The steersman alone stood at the ship's helm. The little mermaid leaned her white arms on the bulwarks and looked towards the east, watching for the dawn. She well knew that the first sunbeam would see her turning into foam. She saw her sisters rise out of the sea. Deathly pale were their features, and their long hair no more fluttered over their shoulders, it had all been cut off.

"We have given it to the witch," said they, "to induce her to help you so that you may not die. Here is a penknife she has given us. Before the sun rises you must plunge it into the Prince's heart, and when his warm blood trickles down

upon your feet they will again be changed to a fish-like tail, you will once more become a mermaid, and will live your full three hundred years ere you change to foam on the sea. But hasten! Either he or you must die before sunrise. A few minutes more and the sun rises, and then all will be over with you." At these words they sighed deeply and vanished.

The little mermaid drew aside the purple curtains of the pavilion where lay the bride and bridegroom. Bending over them, she kissed the Prince's forehead, and then glancing at the sky she saw that the dawning light became every moment brighter. The Prince's lips unconsciously murmured the name of his bride—he was dreaming of her, and her only, whilst the penknife trembled in the hand of the unhappy mermaid. All at once she threw the knife far out into the sea, and, with eyes fast becoming dim and fixed, she looked once more at her beloved Prince, then plunged from the ship into the sea.

She felt her body slowly but surely dissolving into foam, but the sun rose from his watery bed, and his beams fell so softly and warmly upon her that she was scarcely sensible of dying. She still saw the glorious sun, and over her head hovered a thousand beautiful transparent forms. The voices of those airy creatures above her had a melody so sweet and soothing that a human ear would be as little able to catch the sound as her eye was capable of distinguishing their forms. They hovered around her without wings, borne by their own lightness through the air. The little mermaid at last saw that she had a body as transparent as theirs, and felt herself raised gradually from the foam of the sea to higher regions.

"Where are they taking me?" asked she, and her words sounded just like the voices of those heavenly beings.

"Speak you to the daughters of air?" was the answer. "The mermaid has no immortal soul, and can only acquire that heavenly gift by winning the love of one of the sons of men, her immortality depends upon union with man. Neither do the daughters of air possess immortal souls, but they can acquire them by their own good deeds. We fly to hot countries, where the children of earth are sinking under sunny breezes—our fresh, cooling breath revives them. We

diffuse ourselves through the atmosphere, we perfume it with the delicious fragrance of flowers, and thus spread delight and health over the earth. By doing good in this manner for three hundred years we win immortality, and receive a share of the eternal bliss of human beings. And you, poor little mermaid! who, following the impulse of your own heart, have done and suffered so much, you are now raised to the airy world of spirits, that by doing deeds of kindness for three hundred years you may gain an immortal soul."

The little mermaid stretched out her transparent arms to the sun, and, for the first time in her life, tears moistened her eyes.

And now again all were awake and rejoicing in the ship. She saw the Prince with his pretty bride, they had missed her, and they looked sorrowfully down on the foamy waters, as if they knew she had plunged into the sea. Unseen she kissed the bridegroom's forehead, smiled upon him, and then, with the rest of the children of air, soared high above the rosy cloud which was sailing so peacefully over the ship.

"After three hundred years we shall fly in the kingdom of Heaven!"

"We may arrive there even sooner," whispered one of her sisters. "We fly unseen through the dwellings of men, where there are children, and whenever we find a good child, who gives pleasure to his parents and is worthy of their love, a year is struck out of our three hundred. But when we see a rude, naughty child, we weep bitter tears, and every tear we shed adds a day to our time of trial."

THE NEIGHBOURS

ANYONE would have thought that something important was taking place in the duck pond, but there was nothing at all. The ducks who had been resting quietly in the water, or standing on their heads in it, for they can do so, had all at once rushed to the shore, leaving the traces of their feet in the wet clay. Far and wide then quacking could be heard. The water too, which had hitherto been as smooth as glass, was now troubled. A moment before it had clearly reflected every tree and bush near the old farmhouse—the house itself with the holes in the thatch, and the swallow's nest, and above all the large rose tree with its branches and flowers covering the wall, and hanging almost down into the water, on whose clear surface these were all shown as in a picture, only with everything standing on its head. But now that the water was troubled, colours and forms seemed to run into each other, and the picture was spoiled. Two feathers from the ducks' wings, which had hitherto been calmly wafted hither and thither, now took flight, as though carried away by a gust of wind, and yet not a breath was stirring.

Presently they lay still, and the water also became still and smooth, again reflecting, as before, the peasant's gable roof, the swallow's nest, and the large rose tree. Each single rose beheld itself therein, all were beautiful, but they knew it not, for no one had ever told them so. The sun shone through their delicate leaves, all sent forth the sweetest fragrance, and every rose felt just as we do when our hearts are full of untold happiness.

"How delightful this life is!" said each rose to herself, "the only thing I can find to wish for is, that I could kiss the sun because he is so warm and bright. Ah! and then, too, the roses down in the water, I would kiss them also, they are exactly like us. And I should like to kiss those dear little birds in the nest just below them. There are some others,

too, above us, they push out their tiny heads and twitter prettily. Ours are certainly pleasant neighbours, both above and below. Oh, how charming it is to live here!"

The young birds above and those below were the same, they were sparrows, and their nest was reflected in the water. Their parents were sparrows also, and had taken for their own an empty swallow's nest of the year before, and were now quite at home in it.

"Are those the ducks' children swimming down there?" asked the young sparrows, as soon as they had spied out the two feathers on the water.

"If you must ask questions, at least let there be some sense in them!" said the mother. "Don't you see that they are feathers—clothes such as I wear, and as you will wear some day? Only ours are of a finer quality. All the same, I would like to have them up here, they would help to keep the nest warm. I should like to know what it was that frightened the ducks just now. It must have been something in the water, for it could not be my calling to you, though I did say 'twit' rather loudly. Those thick-headed roses might have found out what was the matter, but they know nothing and do nothing but look at themselves and scent the air. I am heartily tired of such neighbours!"

"Listen to the sweet little birds up there!" said the roses. "They are trying to sing, they can hardly manage yet, but they will in time. How pleasant that must be! It is quite amusing to have such merry neighbours!"

Now came galloping up to the water two horses with a peasant boy upon one of them. The boy had taken off his outer garment, but he wore a large broad-brimmed black hat. He whistled as though he too had been a little bird, and rode through the deepest part of the pond. When he came up to the rose tree he tore off one of the roses and stuck it in his hat, then fancying himself very smart he rode off again. The other roses looked after their lost sister, and asked each other, "Where is she gone?"

"I should like to go out into the world," said one of the roses, "but it is very pleasant here at home. All day long the sun is warm, and at night the sky is even more beautiful



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"SHE SAV' HER SISTEPS PISE OUT OF THE SEA"

than during the day. We can see that through all those little holes." She meant the stars, but she knew no better.

"We are the life of the house," said the mother of the sparrows, "and a swallow's nest brings luck, folks say, so they are glad enough to have us. But as to our neighbours such a great rose bush as that by the wall only makes the place damp. I should think it will be rooted up soon, and then, perhaps, corn may grow there. Roses are good for nothing but for people to look at and smell, or, at most, to stick in their hats. And this I have heard from my mother every year they fall to pieces, the peasant's wife collects them and strews salt over them, then a French name is given to them, and afterwards they are thrown into the fire to perfume the room. Such is their life, they live only to please the eyes and the nose. Now you know all about them."

As the evening closed in the gnats danced merrily in the warm air, the clouds above looked red and bright, and the nightingale came and sang to the roses. He sang that beauty was like sunshine in the world, and that the beautiful shall live for ever. But the roses thought that the nightingale was singing about himself, which indeed might have been true, they never thought that the song was meant for them alone. Still they were pleased with it, and wondered whether all the young sparrows would not become nightingales in time.

"I understand quite well what that bird was singing about," said one of the young sparrows. "There was only one word that was not clear to me. What does he mean by 'the beautiful'?"

"The beautiful is nothing!" said the mother bird, "at least it is only something for outside show. Over yonder at the hall the doves have a house of their own, and peas and grains of corn are strewn for them every day. I have dined with them sometimes, and so shall you by and by, for I believe in the old saw 'Tell me what company you keep, and I will tell you what you are'. Well, up at the hall there are two birds with green necks and a tuft on their heads, they can spread out the tail as though it were a large wheel, and it has so many colours that one's eyes are dazzled by looking at it. That is 'the beautiful'. The birds are called peacocks, they should just be stripped of their feathers and then they would not look

different from us and everybody else I would have plucked them myself, had they not been so large"

"I will pluck them, depend upon it!" said the youngest sparrow, who had not yet a single feather of his own

In the farmhouse dwelt two young married people They were cheerful and industrious and loved each other, so everything went on pleasantly with them On Sunday morning the young wife came out, gathered a handful of the loveliest roses, put them into a glass of water, and placed the glass on the sideboard

"Now I can see that it is Sunday," said the husband as he kissed his fair young wife Then they sat down hand in hand and read a psalm, while the sun shone brightly through the windows upon the fresh roses and the happy young couple

"I am weary of looking at this," said the mother of the sparrows as she peeped from her nest into the room, and away she flew

Every Sunday fresh roses were gathered to brighten the room, and yet the rose tree blossomed none the less The young sparrows at last had feathers of their own, and wanted to fly away with their mother, but this she would not allow, so they had to remain in the nest while she flew away alone And well it was for them that they did remain, for one day, not looking where she was going, she flew right into a snare made of horse hair, which some boys had tied to a bough The horse hair pressed so tightly round her leg that she thought it was being cut through Oh, what pain! what terror she suffered!

The boys sprang forward to secure their prey, their grasp was cruelly hard "It is only a sparrow," said they, but they would not let her fly again, they took her home, and every time she cried out they struck her on the beak

There was an old man in the yard who used to make soap for shaving and washing, and sell it made up into balls and cakes A merry, careless old fellow he was, and a merry, wandering life he led When he saw the poor sparrow which the boys had caught, and which they said they did not care about, he said to them, "Suppose we make the ugly bird beautiful!"



"IN TERROR AND ANGUISH SHE FLEW HOMEWARDS"

The mother sparrow shivered from head to foot with fear on hearing this. Out of his box, which was provided with the brightest colours, the old man took a lot of shining leaf-gold, and having sent the boys for an egg, he smeared the white of it all over the bird, and then laid upon it the leaf-gold. Thus mother sparrow was gilt. But she took no pleasure in her finery, her limbs shook with fear. And the old soap-maker tore off a piece of red cloth from his jacket, cut it and clipped it to look like a cock's comb, and then stuck it on the poor bird's head.

"Now you shall see Gold-coat fly," said he, letting mother sparrow loose, and away she flew in deadly terror. Oh, how she sparkled in the sunshine! All the sparrows, even a grown crow—a knowing old bird—was scared at the unusual sight. But they all flew after her to find out what sort of strange bird this might be.

In terror and anguish she flew homewards. She was ready to sink down upon the earth, and the crowd of birds, both small and great, grew bigger every moment, some even flew at her to peck her.

"Only look! only look!" cried they all.

"Only look! only look!" squeaked out the young ones as she flew towards the nest. "Surely that is a young peacock, for peacocks are of all manner of colours, they hurt the eyes," mother said. "Twit, that is the beautiful!" And then they pecked at her with their little beaks, so that she could not get into the nest, and she was so overcome with fright that she could not even say "twit", far less tell them that she was their mother. And all the other birds pecked her till not a single feather was left, and wounded and bleeding she sank into the rose bush.

"Poor creature!" said the roses, "we will hide you. Come, rest your little head upon us."

Once more the sparrow opened her wings wide, then drew them again close to her side and lay dead among her neighbours, the fresh lovely roses.

"Twit! twit!" said one of the young sparrows in the nest, "where can mother be staying? I can't understand it at all. Perhaps this is a trick of hers to teach us to shift for

ourselves She has left us the house for an inheritance, but I should like to know which of us is to have it when we have families?"

"Ah, I can tell you that!" said the youngest "I shall not let you stay here when I have a mate and children of my own"

"But I shall have more wives and children than you," said another

"But I am the eldest," cried a third, and then all began to scold, flap their wings, and peck with their beaks, till one after another was thrown out of the nest There they lay in a rage, holding their heads on one side and blinking their eyes, which was their fashion of sulking

They could already fly a little, and through practice they improved, and at last, having agreed on a sign by which they might know each other if they should chance to meet in the world, they went each its own way The sign they agreed on was to say "twit", and scrape the ground three times with the left leg

The youngest sparrow, who remained in the nest, made himself as big as he could He was now a householder However, his state of importance did not last long, for during that very night red flames of fire burst through the windows of the farmhouse, caught the dry straw of the roof, and blazed up dreadfully The house was burnt down, and with it the sparrow and his nest The young married couple happily escaped with their lives

When the sun rose next morning, and everything seemed refreshed as after a gentle sleep, nothing remained of the cottage except a few blackened beams attached to the chimney, which stood among the ruins quite its own master Thick smoke was still rising from the ruins, but the rose tree flourished still as blooming as ever, and the peaceful water of the pond reflected every single bough and flower just as before

"How pretty those roses look blooming on the walls of that ruined farmhouse!" cried a passer-by "It is the most charming little picture one could think of, I must have it!" And he took out a little book with white leaves, for he was an artist, and sketched the blackened, smoking ground, the half-burnt planks, the chimney, which seemed to lean on one side more

and more every moment, as though about to fall, and, in the foreground, the large, beautiful rose tree, whose beauty indeed had been the cause of the little picture being sketched

Later in the day, two of the sparrows who had been brought up in the nest came back "Where is the cottage?" said they "Where is the nest? Twit, it is all burnt, and our strong little brother is burnt also! That is because he turned us out of the nest Those roses have had a narrow escape There they are still, with their cheeks as red as ever They are not the sort to worry themselves over other folks' troubles Well, I shall not speak to them, and this is a horrible place That is my opinion!" And away they flew

On a bright, sunny, autumn day, a day so bright that one might have thought it still the middle of summer, a great many doves—some black, some white, some violet-colour—were flitting to and fro in the nicely kept courtyard in front of the grand flight of steps leading up to the hall door Their feathers glittered in the sunshine, and the mother pigeons bustled about crying to their children, "Stand in groups! stand in groups!" for this was the best way of showing themselves off to advantage

"Who are those little grey birds hopping about amongst us?" asked an old dove with red and green eyes "Little grey birds! little grey birds!" repeated she

"They are sparrows, good little things enough, we have always had the credit of being good-natured, so we let them pick up a few of our grains They never talk to us, and they scrape so neatly with their legs!"

They did scrape, three times they scraped with their left legs, and then said "twit", and thus they knew each other again They were, in fact, three sparrows from the nest in the roof of the burnt cottage

"The food here is very good!" said one of the sparrows And the doves strutted round each other, ruffled their feathers, and formed their own opinion about all they saw

"Just look at that pouter pigeon!" said one of the doves "See how she snaps up the peas! She gets too many, she gets the best, coo, coo, look what an ugly, wicked creature she is, and how she raises her crest, coo, coo!" And the dove's eyes

sparkled with ill-will "Join the group, join the group, little grey birds! little grey birds! coo, coo, coo!" And then their beaks went to work. So they chattered, and so they may go on chattering for a thousand years

The sparrows ate heartily and listened attentively, nay, they even stood in groups like the pigeons, but that did not suit them. So, having satisfied their hunger, they left the doves to themselves, and, after giving their opinions of these to each other, hopped under the garden fence, and finding the door of the summer-house open, one of them ventured upon the threshold "Twit," said he, "see what I dare to do!"—"Twit," said another, "I will do more!" whereupon he hopped into the room. Nobody was there, and the third sparrow seeing this, flew boldly in, crying out, "Either do a thing thoroughly, or not at all. What a ridiculous human nest this is! And how is this? What do I see?"

Plainly before their eyes were then old neighbours the roses, they mirrored themselves in the water, and the blackened beams of the cottage rested slantingly upon the falling chimney. Well might the sparrows exclaim, "How is this? How came all this in a room in a nobleman's house?" Then the sparrows tried to fly over the chimney, but they only knocked themselves against a flat wall. It was a picture, a large splendid picture, which the artist had made from his little sketch.

"Twit," said the sparrows, "it is nothing at all, it is only an appearance. Twit, I suppose that is the beautiful! Can you understand it, for I can't." And they flew away, for people came into the room.

Days and years passed away. Many times had the doves cooed and wooed, nay, quarrelled too, the spiteful birds. The sparrows lived luxuriously in summer and were half-frozen in winter. They had young ones, and each of course thought his own the handsomest and cleverest of all the sparrows in the world. They flew hither and thither, and when they chanced to meet they greeted each other with a "twit" and three scrapes of the left leg. The eldest of them had lived a single life, and had neither nest nor young ones, and wishing once more to visit a large town, she one day flew to Copenhagen. Here she saw a large, handsome house standing close by the

palace and the canal, wherein lay vessels heavily laden with fruits and wine. The windows of the house were wider below than above, and on peeping through, the room appeared to Miss Sparrow's eyes like a tulip, so rich and varied were the colours of the walls. Within the tulip stood a number of white figures, some of marble, some only of plaster, but, marble or plaster, it was all the same to Miss Sparrow. On the roof of the house was a metal car, with metal horses, and the goddess of Victory, likewise of metal, guiding them. It was Thorwaldsen's Museum.

"How it shines! how it shines!" said the sparrow maiden. "Why, this must be 'the beautiful' Twit, it is much larger than a peacock!" She remembered that her mother had told them in her childhood that the peacock was the largest specimen of the beautiful known to her.

And she flew down into the court. This also was splendid. Palm branches and fresh green foliage were painted on the walls, and in the centre was a large rose tree in full blossom, its fresh green branches, laden with flowers, drooping over a grave—one solitary grave.

She flew to the spot, for many other sparrows were there. "Twit," said she, and scraped the ground three times with her left leg. This greeting she had practised again and again that year, and no one had understood it, for friends once parted do not meet every day. The salute had become a mere matter of form. But now, to her surprise, two old sparrows and one young one said "Twit" in return, and likewise scraped with their left legs.

"Ah, good morning! good morning!" Here had met together no fewer than three old sparrows from the swallow's nest in the cottage roof, and one of their descendants. "To think that we should all meet here!" said they. "This is a very fine place, but there is not much to eat. It is 'the beautiful', you know! Twit!"

Several persons now came into the court from one of the rooms where stood the marble figures, and they went up to the grave which held the remains of the great master whose skill had formed these marble statues.

All stood with glistening eyes round Thorwaldsen's grave,

and some picked up the scattered rose leaves to carry home with them. There were travellers from distant lands, from mighty England, from Germany, and from France, and the fairest lady in the company plucked one of the roses and wore it near her heart. This made the sparrows think that the roses reigned here, and that this fine mansion had been built for them alone. It seemed to them too much honour, but as mankind was evidently intent on showing respect to the roses, they determined to do the same. "Twit," said they, and swept the ground with their tails, winking with one eye upon the roses the while. Long did they look at them before they could quite make up their minds whether these roses were or were not their old neighbours. Yes, such most assuredly they were. The artist who had sketched the rose bush growing near the blackened remains of the farmhouse had afterwards got permission to transplant it, and had then given it to the architect of the Museum. Nowhere could roses be found more lovely or more fragrant than those borne by this tree, so it was planted close by Thorwaldsen's grave, and there, a living symbol of the beautiful, it blossomed year after year, and scattered its rosy leaves to be gathered and carried away to distant lands as memorials of the place on which they had fallen.

"So you have settled in this town?" said the sparrows. And the roses nodded assent, they had recognized their neighbours and were very glad to see them.

"How delightful it is to live and blossom here, to see old friends sometimes, and kind faces every day! Here every day is like a festival."

"Twit," said one of the sparrows, "to be sure, they are our old neighbours. Ah, I remember the time when they lived by the duck pond. Twit, how droll it is that they should attain such a high station! Some folks come to honour while they are sleeping. And what there is so wonderful in a great red rag like that, I can't think! Ah, there is a withered leaf, that I can see!" And they pecked at it till the leaf fell off, but the tree looked all the fresher and greener, and the roses gave forth their perfume to the sunbeams even after they had fallen on Thorwaldsen's grave, with whose long-enduring name the memory of their fleeting beauty thus became linked.

LITTLE TUK

YES, he was called Little Tuk, but that was not his real name. Before he could speak plainly he had called himself so, meaning it no doubt for Charles, and it was all very well when one knew. Little Tuk had to take care of his sister Gustava, who was smaller even than himself, and he had also to learn his lesson, and the two things could not very well be done at the same time. The poor boy sat with his little sister in his lap singing to her all the pretty songs he knew, yet every now and then he looked into his geography book, which lay open beside him. By next morning he must know by heart all the towns in Zealand, and be able to tell about them all that could be told.

At last his mother came home and took little Gustava. Tuk then ran to the window, and read and read till he had nearly read his eyes out, for it was growing darker every minute, and his mother could not afford to buy candles.

"There goes the old washerwoman up the lane," said the mother, as she looked out of the window. "The poor woman can hardly drag herself along, and now she has to carry besides that great pail of water from the pump. Jump up, like a good boy, little Tuk, and help the poor old woman." So little Tuk jumped up and ran across quickly and helped her. When he came back it was quite dark, and as there was no candle, he had to go to bed. There he lay still thinking of his geography lesson, of Zealand, and of all that his master had told him. It should have been all read over again by rights, but that he could not do for want of a light. He put his geography book under his pillow, for somebody had told him that this would help him wonderfully to remember his lesson. But Tuk had never yet found that this sort of help was at all to be trusted.

So there he lay, thinking and thinking, till all at once he felt as though someone were kissing his eyes and mouth. He slept, and yet he did not sleep, for he seemed to see the old washerwoman's mild eyes fixed upon him, and to hear her say

"It would be a shame, Little Tuk, if you were not to know your lesson. You helped me, so now I will help you, and may Providence always do so."

And then the leaves of the book under Little Tuk's head began to rustle and to turn over and over.

"Cluck, cluck, cluck!" cried a hen—she came from the town of Kjöge¹. "I am a Kjöge hen," said she, and she told Little Tuk how many people lived in the town, and about the battle that had once been fought there, and which was hardly worth speaking about.

"Kribbly krabbly, kribbly krabbly!" down came something, it was the popinjay from the shooting-ground at Prastoe². It declared that there were as many inhabitants in Prastoe as it had nails in its body, it was a proud bird. "Thorwaldsen³ lived in one corner of Prastoe. Am not I a pretty bird, a merry popinjay?"

And now Little Tuk no longer lay in bed, he was on horse-back—on he went, gallop, gallop! A magnificently clad knight—a knight of the olden time—wearing a bright helmet and a waving plume, held him on his own horse, and on they rode together, through the wood to the ancient city of Vordingborg, and it was once again full of life and bustle as in the days of yore. The high towers of the king's castle rose up against the sky, and bright lights were seen gleaming through the windows. Within were song, and dance, and merriment. King Waldemar and the noble young ladies of his court were dancing together stately, old-fashioned measures. Morning dawned, the sun rose, and the outlines of the buildings faded away, one form after another seemed blotted out, till at last only one tower remained to mark the

¹ Kjöge is a small town on Kjöge Bay. To lift up children by putting the hands on each side of their head is called showing their Kjöge hens.

² Prastoe, a still smaller place.

³ Thorwaldsen lived at Nysø, about a hundred yards from Prastoe, and there he executed some of his wonderful works.

spot where that royal castle had stood¹ And the vast city had shrunk up into a poor, mean-looking little town, and the schoolboys came out of school, their books under their arms, and they said, "Two thousand inhabitants", but that was not true, there were not near so many

And Little Tuk lay in his bed again, he knew not whether he had been dreaming or not Again there was somebody close by his side

"Little Tuk, Little Tuk!" cried a voice It was the voice of a young sailor, so young that he might have been a naval cadet, though he was not "I offer you many greetings from Corsor² Corsor is a new town—a living town, it has steamships and stage coaches of its own People used to call it a low, vulgar place, but that is an old, worn-out prejudice. 'I dwell by the seaside,' says Corsor, 'I have broad high-roads and pleasure-gardens, and I have given birth to a poet, a very amusing one too, which is more than all poets are I once thought of sending a ship all round the world I did not send it, but I might just as well have done so Then, too, I am fragrant with delightful odours, because thickly round my gates the most lovely roses blow!'"

Little Tuk could see the roses, their soft, blushing red petals and their fresh green leaves gleamed before his eyes, but in a moment the flowers had vanished, and the green leaves spread and thickened, a perfect grove had grown up above the bright waters of the fiord, and above the grove towered the two high-pointed steeples of a glorious old church From the grass-grown side of the hill there gushed forth, in clear rainbow-hued streams, a fountain with a merry, musical voice, and close beside it sat a King, wearing a gold crown upon his long dark hair This was King Hroar sitting by the fountain, and hard by was the town now called Roeskilde³ (Hroar's Fountain) And up the hillside into the old church

¹ Wordingburg under King Waldemar was a place of great importance, but is now a very insignificant town Only one tower remains to show where the castle stood

² Corsør, on the Great Belt, used to be called the most tiresome town in Denmark. It is the birthplace of the poet Baggesen

³ Roeskilde (from *Roesquelle*=rose spring), once the capital of Denmark. The town took its name from King Hroar and the many springs of the neighbourhood. In its beautiful cathedral most of the kings and queens of Denmark are buried. In Roeskilde the Danish States general used to meet

went hand in hand all the kings and queens of Denmark with their golden crowns on their heads, and the organ's tones mingled with the clear rippling of the fountains. And Little Tuk saw and heard it all. "Don't forget these towns," said King Hiora.

All at once this scene too had vanished! What had become of it? It was just like turning over the leaves of a book. Now he saw an old woman, a peasant who came from Soroe,¹ where grass grows in the very marketplace. Her grey linen apron was thrown over her head and back, the apron was wet—it must have been raining. "Yes, so it has," said she, and then she began to repeat something very funny out of Holberg's comedies and out of the old ballads about Waldemar and Absalon. But all of a sudden she shrank up together, and rocked her head just as if she were going to jump. "Croak," said she, "it is wet, it is wet, it is still as the grave in Soroe!" She had become a frog. "Croak!" and again she was an old woman. "One must dress to suit the weather," says she, "it is wet, it is wet, my town is like a flask—one goes into it through the cork, and through the cork one must get out again. But I have healthy, rosy-checked boys at the bottom of the flask. There they learn wisdom. Hebrew! Greek! Croak, croak, croak!"

Her voice was like frog music, or like the noise one makes in walking through a marsh in great boots—always the same tone, so monotonous, so dull, that Little Tuk fell into a sound sleep, and a very good thing it was for him.

But even in this sleep a dream, or something like it, came to him. His little sister Gustava, with her blue eyes and curling flaxen hair, had, it seemed, all at once grown up into a beautiful girl, and, though she had no wings, she could fly, and they flew together over all Zealand—over its green woods and blue waters.

"Listen to the cock crowing, Little Tuk! Cock-a-doodle-doo!—look at the hens scraping away in the town of Kjøge! There you shall have a fine poultry yard, you shall no longer

¹Sorøe, a very quiet little town, beautifully situated in the midst of forests and lakes. Denmark's Molière, Holberg, founded a fine academy here. The poets Hanzk and Jagemann were professors here.

suffer hunger and want, you shall shoot at the popinjay and reach the mark, you shall be a rich and happy man, your house shall rise as proudly as King Waldemar's castle at Vordingborg, and shall be decked splendidly with marble statues, like those at Prastoe. Your good name shall be borne round the world like the ship which should have gone out from Corsor, and in the town of Roeskilde you shall speak and give counsel, wisely and well, like King Hroar, and then at last, Little Tuk, when you shall lie in your peaceful grave, you shall sleep as quietly——"

"As if I lay sleeping in Soroe!" said Little Tuk, and thereupon he awoke. It was bright daylight, and he remembered nothing of all his dreams. They were to him as though they had never been.

He jumped out of bed and sought for his book, he knew the names of all the towns in his lesson perfectly well. And the old washerwoman put her head in at the door and nodded to him, saying

"Thanks for yesterday's help, dear child! May the angels bring your best dream to pass!"

But Little Tuk had forgotten what he had dreamt. It mattered not, though, the angels knew it.

THE SHADOW

In hot countries the sun's rays burn fiercely, and there the people are dyed a mahogany brown colour, while in the very hottest regions of all they are scorched into negroes. Our present story, however, is concerned with only the moderately hot country which was visited, once upon a time, by a learned man from the cold, cold north. He at first thought that he might run about as freely as he had been used to do at home, but he soon found out his mistake, and, like other reasonable people, he stayed in his house all day long, keeping the doors and window-shutters closed, just as though everybody were asleep or away from home. The narrow street of lofty houses where he dwelt, lay so that the sunbeams fell full upon it from morning till night, till it became quite unbearable, and the learned man from the cold country felt as though he were sitting in a heated oven. He was a young as well as a clever man, but he suffered greatly from the heat, indeed he became quite thin. His shadow also—for the sun affected that as well as himself—was, during the daytime, considerably smaller than it had been before. However, at night, after the sun had set, both man and shadow constantly revived.

It was really a pleasure to see the change! As soon as lights were brought into the room the shadow stretched itself up the wall as far as the ceiling, it seemed stretching itself to the utmost to recover its original size. The learned man used to go out on the balcony—that was *his* place for stretching,—and when the stars shone forth in the clear, balmy air, he felt a new life breathing through his limbs. Figures of men and women then made their appearance on all the balconies in the street, and in hot countries no window is without a balcony, for people must have air, even those so used to heat that they have become mahogany coloured. Above and below, everything became full of life. Butchers

and bakers, cobblers and tailors, flitted about the streets. Chairs and tables were brought out, and thousands of lamps were lit. One shouted, another sang, some walked, some drove, some rode on asses—*klung-eling-eling*, the little bells on their harness tinkled merrily as they passed, little boys let off squibs and crackers, the church bells pealed, psalms were sung, and many a solemn funeral procession moved along. Yes, the street was then thoroughly alive!

Only in one house, that which stood exactly opposite the one in which dwelt the northern student, there was silence. And yet somebody lived there, for flowers stood in the balcony, blooming beautifully in the sun's heat, and they could not have done so unless constantly watered, and watered they could not be without hands. Besides, every evening the balcony window used to open, and, although it was quite dark in the front room, from some inner room notes of music were heard, very lovely music—at least so our stranger thought. But this might be only a fancy, as, according to him, everything in this hot country was very delightful, excepting the heat of the sun. The stranger's landlord said that he did not know who lived in the house opposite. No one had ever been seen there, and as for the music, it seemed to him dreadfully tedious. "It is," said he, "just like a person sitting and practising a piece which he cannot play—always the same piece. 'I shall play it at last,' he keeps on saying, but it is plain that he never will, with all his practising."

One night the northern student was sleeping. He slept close to the open window, and when the curtains were waved aside by the wind, the opposite balcony was discovered wrapped in a wondrous splendour. All the flowers shone like flames of the loveliest and most varied hues, and amid the flowers stood a tall, graceful maiden, surrounded by a glory that dazzled the student's eyes. Indeed, in his eagerness he opened them so fearfully wide that he awoke.

With one spring he was on the floor, and crept softly behind the curtain. But the lady was gone, the glory which had dazzled his eyes was gone, the flowers shone no longer, but looked exactly as they had been wont to look. The door was half open, and from an inner room came the sound of

THE SHADOW

music so soft and lovely, and filling the mind with such pleasing thoughts, that it must surely be the result of sorcery, for who could be living there?

One evening the northern student was sitting in his balcony. Lights were burning in the room behind him, and, as was quite natural, his shadow fell upon the opposite wall. There it seemed to sit among the flowers of the balcony, and whenever its master moved, the shadow moved also, as a matter of course.

"I verily believe my shadow is the only thing stirring over there," said the learned stranger. "See how comfortably it sits among the flowers, the door within is half open, I do wish it would but have the sense to walk in, look about it, and then come back to tell me what it had seen. Ah! it might be of great advantage to you, Mr Shadow," continued he, jestingly. "be so kind as to step forward. Well, will you go?" And he nodded to the shadow, and the shadow nodded again in answer. "Well then, go but don't stay." And forthwith the stranger arose, and his shadow on the opposite balcony rose also, the stranger then turned round, whereupon the shadow likewise turned round, and any close observer might have seen that the shadow passed through the half-opened door into the apartment in the opposite house, just as the stranger retired into his own room, closing the long curtains behind him.

Next morning the learned stranger went out to drink coffee and read the newspapers. "How is this?" he exclaimed, as he came out into the sunshine. "Why, I have no shadow! Then it really did pass over into the opposite house yesterday evening, and has not returned! Now, on my word, this is the most provoking thing ever heard of!"

He was greatly vexed, not so much because his shadow was gone, as because he knew that there was already a story about a man without a shadow which was well known to all the people in his own country, so that now, if he were to tell his story, everybody would call him a teller of other folks' tales, and that would not please him at all. So he made up his mind to say nothing about it, and that was certainly a wise resolve.

In the evening he went again into the balcony, first placing the candles so as to be just behind his back, for he knew that a shadow always needs its master to act as its screen, but he could by no means entice it forth. He stretched himself, he drew himself together, but no shadow made its appearance. He said, "Hem, hem!" but that was of no avail either.

All this was vexatious. However, in hot countries everything grows very fast. Accordingly, after eight days had elapsed, on going into the sunshine, he observed, to his great delight, that a new shadow was beginning to spring out from under his feet—the root must have remained there,—and in three weeks' time he had once more a very fair shadow. And this, as he was now travelling homewards, grew rapidly in size during the journey, until at last it became so long and so broad that half of it might have been enough for him.

So this same learned man now went back to his cold fatherland, and he wrote books about all that was true, and good, and beautiful in the world. Days passed on, and weeks passed on, and years passed on—many years.

One evening, when he was sitting alone in his room, he heard a low tapping at the door.

"Come in!" he said, but no one came in, so he arose and opened the door. Before him stood a man so wonderfully thin that the sight startled him. This stranger was, however, exceedingly well dressed, and seemed a person of rank. "With whom have I the honour of speaking?" asked the scholar.

"Ah! I thought as much," replied the thin gentleman. "I thought that you would not know me again. I have gained so much body lately—I have gained both flesh and clothes—I dare say you never thought to see me in such excellent condition. Do you not recollect your old *shadow*? Ah! you must have fancied I never meant to come back at all. Things have gone so well with me since I was last with you, I have become quite wealthy! I can easily ransom myself, if it be necessary!" And with these words he passed his hand over the heavy gold watch-chain which he wore round his neck, and rattled the large bunch of costly seals which hung from it,—and oh! how his fingers glittered with the diamonds encircling them!—And all this was real!

"Shall I ever recover my senses?" said the scholar. "What can all this mean?"

"Certainly it is rather out of the common," said the shadow. "But then you yourself are by no means an ordinary man, and, as you know, I have trod in your steps from childhood. As soon as you thought me capable of going alone, I went my own way in the world. My affairs now are flourishing, and my position most brilliant, nevertheless, a sort of yearning came over me to see you once more before you die. Besides, I felt a wish to see this country again, for one cannot help feeling love for one's own fatherland. I know that you have now another shadow. Now, do I owe anything to him or to you? Be so kind as to tell me how much."

"Is it really and truly yourself?" cried the scholar. "This is indeed most extraordinary! Never could I have believed that my old shadow would return to me a man!"

"Tell me what I owe you," repeated the shadow, "for on no account would I remain in anyone's debt."

"How can you speak so?" said the scholar. "Why talk about debts? You are perfectly free, and I am very glad to hear of your good fortune. Come, old friend, sit down and tell me how it has all come to pass, and what you saw in that mysterious house just opposite mine in the hot country."

"Well, I will tell you," said the shadow, sitting down as requested, "but then, you must first promise that you will never let anyone in this town, where, perchance, you may meet me again, know that I was once your shadow. I have some thoughts of matrimony, I have the means for supporting more than one family."

"Have no fear," replied the scholar, "I will not reveal to anyone what you really are. Here is my hand. Upon my honour as a gentleman I promise not to do so."

"And, upon my honour as a shadow, I will speak truly," rejoined the mysterious visitor. "Of a truth, he could hardly express himself otherwise."

It was certainly quite wonderful to see how much of a man he had become. He was dressed completely in black, the finest black cloth, with shining boots, and a crush hat which could be squeezed together so as to be only crown and brim.

Among the trinkets he wore were a gold chain, seals, and diamond rings. Indeed, the shadow was uncommonly well dressed, and it was his dress which made him appear so much of a man.

"Well, then, now I will tell you all about it," said the shadow, and he planted his shining boots as firmly as he could upon the arm of the scholar's new shadow, which lay like a poodle at its master's feet. This was done, perhaps, out of pride, but more probably under the idea that he might perchance seduce the shadow into cleaving to himself for the future. But the shadow kept its place on the ground, still and motionless, lest it should lose a word, for it was very anxious to learn how it might in its turn free itself and become its own master.

"Can you guess who was dwelling in the opposite house?" asked the shadow. "It was Poesy—most beautiful, most charming Poesy! I was there with her for three weeks, and that is as good as if I had lived there three thousand years and had read all that was imagined and written during that time. This I declare to you, and it is true, I have seen all, and I know all!"

"Poesy!" cried the scholar. "Ah yes! she often lives as a hermit in the very heart of a bustling city. Poesy!—yes, I too have seen her, but it was only for one moment, when sleep had charmed my eyes. She stood at the balcony, radiant and glorious as the Northern Lights. Oh, tell me, pray tell me! You were in the balcony, you entered by the door, and then——"

"Why, then I was in the antechamber," said the shadow. "You remember you used to sit looking across into the antechamber. It was not lighted up, it was in a kind of twilight. But door after door, all open, led through a long suite of rooms, and in the distance there were lights in plenty, quite an illumination, indeed the glare would have killed me had I passed on into the lady's apartment."

"And what didst thou see, then?" asked the learned man.

"I saw everything, and I will describe it. But first—it really is not from pride on my part, but as a free man know-

ing what I know, having the position I hold, not to mention my wealth—I really would like you when you are speaking to me to say *you* instead of *thou*”

“I beg your pardon,” said the scholar, “I did not mean to offend. It is an old habit and not easily broken off. But you are quite right, and I will try to remember. Now tell me what you saw.”

“I saw all that was to be seen,” said the shadow. “I saw and know all.”

“What were the inner rooms like?” again asked the scholar. “Did they seem like fresh, balm-breathing groves, like a holy church? Were those chosen halls like the starry heavens when seen from the top of some high mountain?”

“Everything lovely was there as you describe,” said the shadow. “I did not go quite in, I kept in the twilight of the outer room—but that was a very good position. I saw everything, and I know everything.”

“But what did you see? Did the gods of the olden times pass through those wondrous halls? Did heroes and knights do battle there as of yore? Were there pretty, fairy-like children playing about and telling each other their dreams?”

“I tell you that I was there, and you will understand that I saw everything that was to be seen, and that I became a man! Had you gone over, possibly you might have become something more, but thus it was with me. I gained the knowledge of my inmost nature, of my natural gifts, and of the relationship I bore to Poesy. During the time I spent with you I thought little of these matters. Whenever the sun rose or set, as you know, I became wonderfully tall, indeed, by moonlight I might have been thought more noticeable even than yourself, but I did not then understand my own nature, in that antechamber all was made plain, I became a man! In that short time I quite grew up. When I came forth you were no longer in the hot country, and I was ashamed to go about as a man in my then condition. I wanted boots and clothes, in short, all those outside things that mark a man, or rather make him known to be such. I took my way under the cook-maid’s cloak. I hid myself in it, she little thought whom she was sheltering. It was evening when

I first ventured out, I ran along the street in the moonlight, I stretched myself up along the wall, that is so pleasant and cooling to one's back! I ran up and I ran down, I peeped into rooms through the uppermost, even through the attic windows, I peeped where no one else could peep, I saw what no one else could see. After all, this is but a wretched affair of a world! I would not have wished to be a man, if I had not seen that it gives one power and makes one thought of I saw the most unheard of things among all sorts of men. I saw," continued the shadow emphatically, "what none must know, but all would much like to know—*then neighbours' secret evil deeds*. Had I started a newspaper, it would have had a very large circulation. But, instead of this, I wrote to the folks themselves whose private doings I had spied out, and thus I raised wonder and fear in every town I visited. They were so afraid of me, and they loved me so much! Professors made me a professor, tailors gave me new clothes—you will observe I am well provided, coiners struck coin for me, and women declared I was very handsome! And thus I became the man you see me. And now I must bid you farewell. Here is my card. I dwell on the sunny side of the way, and am always at home in rainy weather."

And the shadow took his departure.

"Strange, certainly, very strange!" said the scholar.

Days and years passed away—the shadow came again.

"How is it with you?" he enquired.

"Alas!" sighed the scholar, "I still write of what is true, and good, and beautiful, but no one seems to care to hear of such things. I am quite in despair. I suppose I take it to heart too much."

"That I never do," returned the shadow. "I am growing fat, as everyone should try to be. Ah, you don't understand the world, and so you let yourself be put out with it. You should travel. I intend to make a tour this summer, suppose you come with me? I should like to have a companion. Will you travel with me as my shadow? It would be a great pleasure to me to have you with me. I will pay your expenses."

"An odd proposal, certainly," and the scholar smiled at the idea

"What does it matter when it suits both of us? Traveling will do wonders for you. Be my shadow, and you shall have everything you want"

"This is too absurd," said the scholar "Are you mad?"

"If I am, all the rest of the world is mad too, and mad it will be to the end," answered the shadow And with this he went his way

Meantime the scholar's affairs grew worse and worse Sorrow and care dogged his steps, and what he said about the true, and the good, and the beautiful, was for about as much use to the most of folks as roses scattered at her feet would be to a cow At last he became downright ill

"Actually, you look like a shadow!" so said his friends, and a shiver thrilled through the scholar's frame on hearing the words

"You must go to the baths," said the shadow at his next visit, "there is nothing else for you I will take you with me for old acquaintance' sake I will pay the expenses of the journey, and you shall write descriptions and entertain me on the way I want to go to the baths myself, my beard does not grow quite as it should do, and that is as bad as a disease, for one cannot do without a beard Now, be reasonable, and accept my offer We shall travel as comrades"

And so they travelled The shadow was now the master, and the master was the shadow They drove, they rode, they walked always together, sometimes side by side, sometimes before or behind one another, according to the position of the sun

The shadow always took care to secure the place of honour, for himself But for this the scholar cared little, he was really a kind-hearted man, and of a very mild and placid temper

One day the master said to the shadow, "Now that we have become travelling companions, we who have grown up together from our childhood, shall we not celebrate our good fellowship, and say *thee* and *thou* when we speak to each other?"

like a man, and, in fact, as you see, I have even given him a shadow of his own. This has been rather expensive, certainly, but I love to be peculiar."

"Hem!" thought the Princess, "am I actually cured? There is nothing like these baths, the waters have of late years had powers almost miraculous. But I shall not leave the place at present, it is only just beginning to grow amusing. This foreign prince—for he must be a prince—pleases me greatly. I hope his beard will not grow too soon, or he will be away again at once."

That evening, in the grand assembly room, the King's daughter danced with the shadow. She was very light, but he was still lighter, she had never before met with such a dancer. She told him what country she came from, and he knew the country. He had been there, though at a time when she was not at home. He had peeped in at both upper and lower windows of the palace. He had seen many curious things, so that he could answer the questions of the Princess, and make revelations to her that were positively startling. Surely he must be the wisest man living! She was struck with wonder and awe, and by the time they had danced the second dance she was fairly in love with him. Of this the shadow soon became aware, for her eyes were continually looking him through and through. They danced a third time, and she was very near telling him what she thought, but, very prudently, she restrained herself, remembering her country and her position, and the number of persons over whom she would reign some day.

"He is a wise man," thought she, "which is a good thing, and he dances charmingly, but has he solid acquirements? They are of no less importance. I must try him." So she began to propound to him various questions, so difficult that she could not have answered them herself, and the shadow made a very strange face.

"Then you cannot answer me?" said the King's daughter.

"Oh, I learned all that in the days of my childhood," replied her new acquaintance. "I believe that even my shadow, now standing at the door yonder, could answer you."

"What you say," answered the shadow, who was now really the master, "is perfectly right, and is, I have no doubt, kindly meant, so I will answer in the same friendly spirit. As a learned man, you know what a surprising thing nature is. There are men who cannot bear the smell of brown paper, it makes them unwell. Others cannot help shuddering when they hear the scratching of a nail on glass. I have a somewhat similar feeling when I hear you use *thou* to me. I feel crushed to the earth, and as if I were again in my former position in relation to you. It is just a feeling, you see, it is not pride. I cannot let you say *thou* to me, but I will gladly use *thou* in speaking to you, so half your wish will be granted."

"It is carrying matters a little too far," thought the scholar, "that I am to say *you* when I speak to my shadow, and he is to say *thou* to me." However, he was obliged to submit.

They arrived at one of the watering-places. Many strangers were there, and amongst them a king's daughter, wonderfully beautiful. She was suffering from being too sharp-sighted—a troublesome disease for others as well as for herself.

She, of course, saw at once that the newcomer was quite a different sort of person from all the other visitors. "They say," observed she, "that he comes here because his beard will not grow, but I see well the real cause—he cannot cast a shadow."

Her curiosity was excited. Accordingly, one day, meeting him on her walk, she took the opportunity of speaking to him. Being a king's daughter, it was not necessary for her to use much ceremony, so she said at once, "What is wrong with you is that you cannot cast a shadow."

"I am delighted to find that your Royal Highness is so much better," was the shadow's reply. "I am aware that it has been your misfortune to be too keen-sighted, but that disease must be entirely cured, for the fact is that I have a very unusual shadow. Do you not see the person who always walks close to me? Other men have mere common shades for their shadows; but I do not like anything that is common. You may have observed that people often give their servants finer clothes for their liveries than they wear themselves, in like manner, I have allowed my shadow to dress himself up

man and you the shadow—that you are only dressed like a man!”

“No one will believe you,” returned the shadow “Be reasonable, pray, or I shall call the guard”

“I am going straight to the King’s daughter!” cried the scholar

“But I am going first,” said the shadow, “and you are going to prison” And to prison he went, for of course the guard obeyed him whom their Princess had chosen as her consort

“You tremble?” observed the Princess when the shadow entered her apartment, “has anything happened? You must not be ill this evening—our bridal evening!”

“I have lived to see the most fearful thing,” said the shadow “You would never believe it—ah! a poor shadow-brain cannot bear much—just imagine it! My shadow has become crazy, he actually believes that he is a man—and I—only think!—that I am his shadow!”

“This is shocking indeed!” said the Princess, “I hope he is locked up?”

“Of course, I am much afraid he will never recover himself”

“Poor shadow! he is truly unfortunate, it would really be a charity to free him from the little life he possesses And, indeed, when I consider how ready people are in these days to take part with the lower classes against the great, it seems to me that the best thing we can do will be to make away with him privately”

“It is hard, very hard, for he has been a faithful servant” And the shadow made as though he sighed

“You are a noble character!” exclaimed the King’s daughter

That evening the whole city was illuminated, cannons were fired—boom!—and the soldiers presented arms All this was in honour of the royal wedding The King’s daughter and the shadow went out on the balcony to show themselves and hear “Hurrah!” shouted again and again

The scholar heard nothing of all these grand doings, for they had already taken his life

"Your shadow! That would be rather remarkable."

"Mind, I do not say decidedly that he can, but I should think so, he has followed me and listened to all I have said for so many years. Yes, really, I should think he could answer you. But your Royal Highness must first permit me to warn you that he especially prides himself upon passing for a man, so that to keep him in good humour—and without that you will get nothing out of him—he must be treated quite as if he were a man."

"Oh, with all my heart!" said the Princess. So she went up to the learned man standing at the door, and began conversing with him about many things. And he answered her in such a manner as fully proved his wisdom and learning.

"What a wonderful man must he be who has so wise a shadow!" thought the Princess. "It would be a positive blessing to my kingdom and people if I were to choose him for my consort. And I will do it."

And they were soon agreed, the King's daughter and the shadow, but no one was to know of their engagement till the Princess returned to her own country.

"No one shall know, not even my shadow!" declared the intended bridegroom, and for this arrangement, no doubt, he had his own reasons.

So they went forthwith to the country of the Princess.

"Listen to me, my good friend," said the shadow to the scholar. "I have now arrived at the height of happiness and power, and I must think of doing something for you. You shall always live with me at the palace, drive out with me in the royal carriage, and receive an annuity of a hundred thousand dollars. But, in return, you must suffer everyone to call you a shadow. You must never tell anyone that you have been a man, and once every year, when I sit publicly in the balcony in the sunshine, you must lie meekly at my feet, as every shadow should lie. For, know this, I am going to marry the King's daughter, this very evening the nuptials will be celebrated."

"No, this is too bad!" exclaimed the scholar, "it would be deceiving the whole country, not to speak of the King's daughter. I will make everything public, how that I am the

the mortar had worn away, he used to picture to himself all sorts of scenes that had taken place there in former times. He fancied how the street looked three centuries ago, when all the houses had flights of steps, projecting upper storeys, and pointed gable-ends. He could even see the soldiers walking about with halberds in their hands, and gutters running down in the shapes of dragons and griffins. Yes, that was just the sort of house to look at for pleasure.

In it he knew there dwelt an old gentleman who had large brass buttons on his coat, and wore a wig. You could be sure it was a real wig. Every morning a serving-man, as old as his master, came to clean the rooms and go on errands. At other times the old gentleman in brass buttons was quite alone in the old house. Sometimes he came and looked out from his window, and then the little boy nodded to him, and he nodded again to the little boy, and thus they became friends and acquaintances, although they had never spoken to each other, but that is not at all necessary. The little boy heard his parents say, "The old gentleman opposite is very well off, but he is dreadfully lonely."

So next Sunday the little boy was very busy wrapping something up in paper. He then went down to the door and watched till the old man who went on errands for the old gentleman came by, and he said to him, "Please take this to the old gentleman up there for me. I have two tin soldiers, this is one of them. I want him to have it, because I know that he is terribly lonely."

And the old man looked quite pleased, nodded, and took the tin soldier into the old house. By and by he came back to ask whether the little boy would not like to come himself and pay the old gentleman a visit. And the child got leave of his parents, and then went over the way into the old house.

And the brass knobs on the balustrades shone much brighter than usual, he thought, as though they had been fresh rubbed in honour of his visit. And the carved trumpeters rising out of the tulips on the door blew with all their might. Their cheeks, he was sure, were much more puffed out than ever they had been before. Yes, they blew their trumpets, "Ta-ra-ra-ra! See the little boy comes, Ta-ra-ra-ra!" and

THE OLD HOUSE

ONCE there stood in a street a very, very old house. It was indeed almost three hundred years old, as might be known by looking at the beam whereon the date was carved, surrounded by wreaths of tulips and curling hop-tendrils. Whole texts, too, were cut in the time-worn wood, after the fashion of by-gone days, and over every window grinned a curiously carved face. The upper story projected a good way beyond the lower, and under the roof ran a leaden gutter with a dragon's head to it. The rainwater was meant to run out from the dragon's mouth, but there being a hole in the gutter, it generally chose, in preference, to pour down through his body.

All the other houses in the street were so new and so spruce, with their large window panes and flat smooth walls, that it was quite plain they could have nothing to do with the old house. They looked as if they were saying to themselves, "How much longer is that heap of rubbish to stand here, a disgrace to the whole street? Why, the upper story puts itself so forward that no one from our windows can see what is being done underneath it! And just look at the steps too. They are as broad as if they belonged to a castle, and as high as if they led up to a church steeple. The non-railing looks for all the world like the entrance to an old tomb, and it has brass knobs too. It is all so stupid and so tasteless!"

On the opposite side of the street all the houses were spruce and new, and of the same way of thinking as the others. But at one of the windows, looking straight at the old house, a little boy, with fresh rosy cheeks and bright sparkling eyes, used to sit, and he thought better of this despised old building. He loved it both in sunshine and in moonshine. And when he sat there, looking at the mouldering wall from which all

her She neither said "thanks" nor "creek", but she looked upon the little boy with her gentle eyes, and he immediately said to the old gentleman, "Where did you get her from?"

"From the old curiosity dealer's opposite," replied the old gentleman "There are many pictures to be had there Nobody knows or cares anything about them, for the people they were meant for were all buried long ago But I happened to know that lady long ago, she has been dead and gone these fifty years."

Under a glass shade below the portrait hung a bouquet of faded flowers, they must have been fifty years old too, at any rate they looked it And the pendulum of the great clock swung backwards and forwards, and the hand went round and round, and everything in the room grew older and older every moment, but they never thought of that.

"They say at home," said the little boy, "that you are terribly lonely"

"Oh no!" was the reply "The old thoughts, and the memories and scenes they bring with them, come and visit me continually, and now you are come too! I am very happy"

And then he took down from the bookcase a picture book Such pictures those were! There were endless processions with the strangest carriages, such as are never seen nowadays There were soldiers not unlike knaves of clubs, and peaceable citizens bearing the banners of their different companies The tailors' flag showed a pair of scissors held between two lions, on the shoemakers' banner there were no boots, but an eagle with two heads, for everything belonging to shoemakers, you know, must be so that they may say, "It is a pair" Ah, a rare picture book that was! And presently the old gentleman went into an adjoining room to fetch out sweetmeats, nuts, and apples It was certainly very pleasant to be in the old house

Then the tin soldier, who stood on the chest of drawers, said "I cannot stand this It is so sad and lonely here, no one who has ever been used to live in a family can accustom himself to such a life as is led here The day is so long and wearisome, and the evenings are still longer It is quite

then the door opened. The whole length of the passage was hung with portraits of knights in armour and ladies in full silk gowns, and the armour rattled and the silk dresses rustled very pleasantly! And then there was a staircase. The stairs first went a good way up, and then down a little, and led to an old, tottering, almost ruinous balcony. There were many a large hole and long crack in it, and the grass and weeds sprouted thickly out of these, and made the place look as green as if it had been a garden instead of a balcony. Curious old flower-pots, all having human faces and asses' ears, were placed here and there, but the flowers in them were allowed to grow just as they pleased. In one pot pinks were growing. They grew all over the sides where the green leaves were sending forth stalk and stem, and saying quite plainly to all, "The air has fanned me, the sun has kissed me, and has promised me a little flower by next Sunday—by the very next Sunday!"

Then his guide led the little boy into a room where the walls were covered with leather hangings, with gold flowers stamped upon them.

"Gilding is sure to wear away,
But leather as surely shall last for aye!"

sang the walls

And here stood high-backed armchairs, carved all over, and with an arm on each side. "Sit down, sit down," they cried. "Ugh! how I am creaking! I have got rheumatism in my back like the old cabinet. Rheumatism in my back, ugh!"

At last the little boy entered the room which fronted the street, and there the old gentleman sat.

"Thanks for the tin soldier, my little friend," said the old gentleman. "And thanks, too, for coming over to see me."

"Thanks, thanks!" or "creak, creak!" said all the pieces of furniture in the room. There were a great many of them, and they stood in each other's way to see the little boy.

On the middle panel of the wall hung the picture of a beautiful lady—very young and very happy she looked—but she was clad quite after the fashion of the olden time. She had powder in her hair and her clothes stood out stiffly round

in it at all. I have many a time been nearly jumping down off the chest of drawers. I saw all of you as plainly as if you had been here. It was Sunday morning again, and all you children were standing before the table and singing your hymns, as you used to sing them. There you stood, looking so earnest, and with your hands clasped, and your father and mother were listening so gravely. And then the door opened, and your little sister Maria, who is not yet two years old, and who always begins to dance whenever she hears music or singing of whatever kind it may be, came in. She had better have stayed away, for she immediately began to dance. You, all of you, stood very grave, though it was really very difficult to be serious any longer. I could not, I laughed till I fell from the table and lamed myself. I am lame still from the fall. It was wrong of me to laugh, I know. And all this happens over and over again within me, and so does everything else that I have lived through and seen. And this is what the old gentleman means by 'his old thoughts, and the memories and scenes they bring with them.' But tell me, do you still sing on Sundays? Tell me something about little Maria, and about my comrade, the other tin soldier. Ah, he is a lucky fellow! I cannot bear this life!"

"You are given away!" said the little boy. "You must stay here; I wonder you don't see that!"

And the old gentleman brought out a drawer wherein were kept many things wonderful to see—money-boxes, and scent-boxes, and packs of old-fashioned cards. And other drawers full of old curiosities were opened. The harpsichord too was opened, there was a landscape painted on the inside of the lid, and the instrument was very hoarse when the old gentleman played upon it. He began to hum a tune.

"Ah yes, she used to sing that!" said he, and he looked up at the portrait he had bought at the curiosity shop, and his eyes sparkled as he looked at it.

"I will go to the wars! I will go to the wars!" cried the tin soldier as loud as ever he could, and down he fell upon the floor.

What could have become of him? The old gentleman hunted in vain, the little boy hunted in vain. "Never mind,

different here from what it is in your house across the way, where your father and mother talk so cheerfully, and you children make such a delightful noise all day long. You can't think how lonely it is! Do you think the old gentleman ever gets petted or has Christmas trees? He will have nothing now but the grave. Oh, I cannot bear it!"

"You must not take it in that way," said the little boy. "For my part, I think it is very pleasant to be here, and did you not hear him say that all his old thoughts and memories came to visit him?"

"That may be, but I don't see them, and I know nothing about them," replied the tin soldier. "I tell you I cannot bear it!"

"But you must bear it," said the little boy.

Here the old gentleman came back, a bright smile on his face, and the most delicious fruits and sweetmeats in his hand, and the little boy quite forgot the tin soldier.

Happy and pleased, the little boy went home. Days and weeks passed. Often and often did the little boy stand at the window to nod at the old house, and often and often did the old gentleman nod to him in return, and then the little boy went to pay another visit.

And the carved trumpeters blew "Ta-ra-ra-ra! See the little boy comes, Ta-ra-ra-ra!" and the swords and the armour in the old knightly portraits rattled, and the ladies' silk dresses rustled, the leather hangings chanted—

"Gilding is sure to wear away,
But leather as surely shall last for aye!"

and the old armchairs creaked, because of the rheumatism in their backs. It was all exactly the same as the first time the little boy had been there, for in the old house one day was exactly like another.

"I cannot bear it any longer!" cried the tin soldier. "It is so very sad, it makes me weep tears of tin! Rather let me go to the wars and lose an arm or a leg, that will be a change at least. I cannot bear this life. I know now what it is to be visited by one's old thoughts and memories, for mine have been paying visits to me, and I assure you there is no pleasure

I shall be sure to find him," said the old gentleman, but he never could find him. The floor was full of cracks, the tin soldier had fallen through one of these, and there he lay buried alive.

Evening came, and the little boy went home. Weeks passed away, many weeks passed away. The windows were now quite frozen over, the little boy had to breathe hard upon them before he could make a tiny peephole through which he could look at the old house, and then he saw that the snow had drifted into all the wooden carved work and quaint devices, and lay quite thick upon the steps, just as though no one were at home. And no one was at home, the old gentleman was dead.

That evening a carriage drove up to the door of the old house, and a coffin was carried down the steps, the old gentleman was to be buried far out in the country. The carriage drove away, no one followed it, all his friends were dead. The little boy kissed his hand to the coffin, then he saw it disappear.

A few days afterwards there was a sale at the old house. The little boy looked out from his window, watching to see the different pieces of furniture as they were carried out. The old knights and ladies, the flower-pots with the long asses' ears, the old chairs and cabinets, all his acquaintances, he saw taken away, some to one place, some to another. The portrait bought at the curiosity shop returned there again, and there it was left undisturbed, for no one now knew anything of that sweet, gentle-eyed face, and no one cared about such an old, dusty, musty picture.

Next spring the house was pulled down, for "it was a disgrace to the street", people said. One could now look from the street right into the room where were the leathern hangings, all torn and gashed, and the green weeds of the balcony clung wildly round the fallen planks. By degrees all was cleared away.

"A very good thing too!" declared the neighbouring houses.

And a pleasant new house with large windows and smooth white walls was built in its stead, and the space in front,



THE OLD GENTLEMAN HUNTED IN VAIN, THE LITTLE BOY HUNTED
IN VAIN

knows it. All his friends were dead, nobody cared about the matter, and I was such a little boy then!"

"He must have been terribly lonely, poor old gentleman!" remarked she

"Yes, terribly lonely!" said the tin soldier, "but it is charming to find that one is not forgotten"

"Charming, indeed!" cried something close by. No one but the tin soldier recognized the thing that spoke, it was a shred from the old leather hangings. The gilding was all worn off, and it looked like a clod of moist earth. Still it held by its former good opinion of itself, and asserted it too

"Gilding is sure to wear away,
But leather as surely shall last for aye!"

However, the tin soldier did not at all believe in such vain boasting

where the old house had stood, was made into a little garden, vines grew clustering up over the neighbours' walls, so as to shelter it on either side, and it was shut out from the street by a large iron grating with a trellis gate. That looked quite grand. People stood outside and tried to peep in through the iron trellis. And the sparrows too clustered by dozens among the vines, chirping as loud and as fast as they could. Many years had elapsed, so many that the little boy had grown up to be a man, yes, and a good and clever man he was, and his parents took great pride and pleasure in him. He had just married, and had removed with his fair young bride into this new house with the garden to it, and he stood by her side in the garden whilst she was planting a little field flower that had taken her fancy. She planted it with her own pretty white hand, and smoothed down the earth round it with her fingers.

"Oh, dear, what was that?" She had pricked herself, there was something sharp and pointed among the soft mould.

It was—only think—it was the tin soldier, the very one the old gentleman had lost, which after being tumbled and tossed about hither and thither, had now lain for many years quietly in the earth.

And the young bride wiped the tin soldier dry, first with a green leaf and then with her own pocket handkerchief, and the tin soldier felt as though awakening from a trance.

"Let me look at him," said the young man, and he smiled and shook his head. "No, it cannot possibly be the very same tin soldier, but it reminds me so of one that I had when I was a little boy." And then he told his wife about the old house and the old gentleman, and the tin soldier that he had given him, because he was so terribly lonely. He told it exactly as it had been, and tears came into his young wife's eyes at thinking of the solitary life the old gentleman must have lived.

"I don't see why this should not be the very same tin soldier," said she. "I will keep it, just to put me in mind of all you have told me, and you must show me the old gentleman's grave."

"I wish I knew it," was the reply, "I believe nobody

"People cannot always have what they like," sighed the flax
"We must suffer sometimes if we wish to learn anything"

But matters seemed to get worse and worse After being steeped and roasted it was bruised and broken, hacked and hackled, and at last put on a wheel that went "whirr, whirr", so fast that it was not possible for the flax to steady its thoughts

"I have been very fortunate," thought the flax amid all these tortures "One ought to be thankful for the happiness one has had in the past" And contented and thankful the flax continued to be till it was put into the loom and turned into a beautiful piece of linen All the flax of that one field, even to the last stalk, was made into that single piece

"Well, but this is charming I should never have expected it What matchless good fortune I have had all my life! What arrant nonsense the stakes in the hedge used to talk with their

'Snip, snap, snurre,
Bassilurre!'

"The song is not ended at all! Life is but just beginning It is a very pleasant thing, too, is life To be sure I have suffered, but that is past now, and I have been made something of at last I am so strong, and yet so soft, so white and so long This is far better than being merely a plant and bearing flowers Then, nobody attended to me, and I could only get water when it was raining Now I am well taken care of The girl turns me over every morning, and I have a shower bath from the water-tub every evening Nay, the parson's wife herself came and looked at me, and said I was the finest piece of linen in the parish No one can possibly be happier than I am now"

The linen was taken into the house and cut up with scissors Oh, how it was cut and torn, and how it was pierced and stuck through with needles! That was certainly no pleasant experience, but at last it was made up into twelve beautiful garments

"So this is my destiny Well, it is very delightful, now I have become something of use in the world, and there

THE FLAX

THE flax was in full bloom Its pretty blue blossoms were as soft as the wings of a moth, and still more delicate And the sun shone on the flax and the rain watered it, and that was as good for the flax flowers as it is for little children, to be washed and kissed by their mother—they look so much fresher and prettier afterwards Thus it was with the flax flowers

“People say I am so fine,” said the flax, “and that I am growing so charmingly tall that a splendid piece of linen will be got from me Oh, how happy I am! How can anyone be happier? Everything around me is so pleasant, and I shall be of use for something or other How the sun cheers me, and how fresh and sweet the rain is! I am happier than I can say, indeed, no plant in the world can feel happier than I do”

“Ah, ah, ah!” jeered the stakes in the hedge, “you don’t know the world, but we know it, there are knots in us” And then they began to sing quite mournfully

“Snap, snap, snurre,
Bassilurre,
And so the song is ended”

“No, it is not ended,” replied the flax, “the sun shines every morning, the rain does me so much good I can see myself grow, I can feel that I am in-blossom What creature could be happier than I am?”

However, one day people came, took hold of the flax, and pulled it up, root and all That was a very bitter trial. Then it was thrown into water as though they intended to drown it, and after that it was put in front of the fire as though they meant to roast it This was most shocking treatment

But the paper was not sent on its travels. It went to the printer's instead, and there all that was written upon it was printed in a book, nay, in many books. And in this way a vastly greater number of people had pleasure and profit therefrom than if the written paper itself had been sent round the world and perhaps got torn and worn to pieces before it had gone halfway.

"Yes, to be sure, this is much more sensible," thought the paper. "It never occurred to me, though. I am to stay at home and be held in as great honour as if I were an old grandfather. The book was written on me first, the ink flowed in upon me from the pen and formed the words. I shall stay at home while the books go about the world, to and fro, that is much better. How glad I am, how fortunate I am!"

So the paper was rolled up and laid on one side. "It is good to rest after hard work," said the paper; "good to have a chance to collect one's ideas and to think of one's real condition. Now first do I rightly know myself. And to know oneself, I have heard, is the best knowledge, the truest progress. And come what will, this I am sure of, all will end in progress, hitherto it has always been progress."

One day the roll of paper was thrown upon the stove to be burnt. People said it should not be sold to the grocer to wrap round pounds of butter and sugar, because it had been written upon. The children in the house gathered round the stove, for they wished to see the blaze; they wanted to count the multitude of tiny red sparks which seem to dart to and fro among the ashes, dying out, one after another, so quickly. They called it seeing "the children come out of school", and the last spark of all was the schoolmaster. They often fancied he was gone out, but another and another spark flew up unexpectedly, and the schoolmaster always tarried a little behind the rest.

And now all the paper lay heaped up on the stove. "Ugh!" it cried, and all at once it burst into a flame. So high did it rise into the air, never had the flax been able to rear its tiny blue blossoms so high, and it shone as the white linen had never shone. All the letters written on it became fiery red.

is really no pleasure like that of being useful. We are now twelve pieces, but we are still one and the same—we are a dozen. Certainly this is being wonderfully fortunate.”

Years passed. At last the linen could wear no longer. “Everything must wear out some time or other,” said each piece. “I should like very much to last a little while longer, but one ought not to wish for impossibilities.” Then the linen was torn to pieces and cut into shreds, and thought that now certainly there was an end of it, for it was not only hacked, it was beaten to a pulp, and boiled and dried and pressed, and it knew not what besides, till at last, after all sorts of tortures, it found itself beautiful fine white paper.

“Now this is a surprise! And a most delightful surprise too!” said the paper. “Why, now I am finer than ever, and I shall be written upon, and no one can say what fine things may be written upon me. Was there ever such good fortune as mine?” And, sure enough, the most beautiful stories and poems were written on the paper, and what was lucky, there was only one blot on it. And the stories and poems were read aloud. And people said that they were very beautiful, and that to read them would make men both wiser and better. Truly a great blessing was given to the world in the words written upon that same paper.

“Certainly, this is more than I could ever have dreamt of when I was a little blue flower of the field. How could I then have dreamt that I would ever be the means of bringing wisdom and gladness to men? I can hardly understand it even now. I have never done anything, beyond the little that in me lay, to strive to exist, and yet I am carried on from one state of honour and happiness to another, and every time that I think within myself, ‘Now, surely, the song is ended’, I am made into something new, something far higher and better. Now, I suppose I shall be sent on my travels, shall be sent round the wide world, so that all men may read me. I should think that would be the wisest plan. Formerly I had blue blossoms, now for every single blossom I have some beautiful thought or pleasant fancy. Who so happy as I?”

THE DARNING NEEDLE

THERE was once a darning needle who thought herself so fine that she fancied herself a sewing needle

"Now take care and hold me tight!" she used to say to the fingers that took her up "Don't lose me, pray! If I were to fall down on the floor, you would never be able to find me again, I am so fine!"

"That's your belief, is it?" said the fingers, as they grasped her round the body

"See, I am coming with a train!" said the darning needle, drawing after her a long thread, but without a single knot in it

The fingers guided the needle to the cookmaid's slippers, of which the upper leather was torn, and had to be sewn together

"This is coarse work!" said the darning needle, "I shall never get through I shall break—I am breaking!"—and break she did "Did I not say so?" continued she. "I am too fine for work like that!"

The cookmaid dropped sealing wax upon the broken darning needle, and then stuck it into her neckerchief

"See, now I am a breastpin!" said the darning needle. "I knew well that I should come to honour, when one is something, one always becomes something" And at this she laughed There she sat now, as proud as if she were driving in her carriage, and looking about her on all sides

"May I take the liberty of asking if you are of gold?" enquired she of the pin that was her neighbour "You have a pleasing exterior and a very peculiar head It is rather small, though You must take care that it grows, for it is not everyone that can have sealing wax dropped upon her!"

And the darning needle drew herself up so proudly that

in an instant, and all the words and thoughts of the writer were surrounded with a glory

"Now, then, I am going straight up into the sun!" said something within the flames. It was as though a thousand voices at once had spoken thus, and the flame burst through the chimney and rose high above it. And brighter than the flame, yet invisible to mortal eyes, hovered little tiny beings, as many as there had been blossoms on the flax. They were lighter and of more subtle essence than even the flame that bore them, and when that flame had quite died away, and nothing remained of the paper but the black ashes, they once again danced over them, and wherever their feet touched the ashes their footprints, the fiery red sparks, were seen. Thus "the children came out of school, and the school-master came last." It was a pleasure to see the pretty sight, and the children of the house stood looking at the black ashes and singing

"Snap, snap, snurre,
Bassilurre,
And now the song is ended"

But the tiny invisible beings replied every one, "The song is never ended! That is the best of it! We know that, and therefore none so happy as we are!"

However, the children could neither hear nor understand the reply, nor would it be well that they should, for children must not know everything

"And were they very distinguished?" asked the piece of bottle glass

"Distinguished!" said the darning needle; "not they, but conceited enough all the same. There were five of them, brothers, all born fingers, they kept very proudly together though they were of different sizes. The first was called Thumb, and was short and thick, and generally stood out of the rank, rather before the others. He had only one joint in his back, and could therefore make only one bow. He used to say that if he were cut off from a man, that man would no longer be fit to be a soldier. Foreman, the second, used to put himself forward everywhere and meddle with everything. Middleman was so tall that he could look over the heads of the others; Ringman wore a gold belt round his body, and as for Littleman, he did nothing at all, and was proud of that, I suppose. So proud were they, indeed, that I took myself off into the gutter!"

"And now we sit together and shine!" said the piece of bottle glass

Just then some more water was poured into the gutter, so that it overflowed, and carried the bit of bottle glass along with it

"So now he has been advanced," said the darning needle, "but I stay here, I am too fine, but that is my pride, and I don't care." And she sat there in her pride, thinking thoughts like these—"I could almost believe I was born of a sunbeam, I am so fine; and yet the sunbeams do not seem to seek me out under the water. Alas! I am so fine that even my mother cannot find me. Had I still my eye, which broke, I believe I could weep. I would not, though; it is not genteel to weep."

One day a couple of boys were raking about in the gutter, hunting for old nails, pennies, or whatever they might find. This was very dirty work, but the boys took a real pleasure in it. "Hullo!" cried one, pricking himself with the darning needle, "there's a fellow for you!"

The sealing wax had worn off, and she had become quite black. Black, however, makes a person look thin, so she thought herself finer than ever.

she fell into the sink, where the cook was engaged just then in washing up

"Now I am going on my travels," said the needle, as she was swept away with the dirty water, "I do hope I shall not go too far, and get lost" But she did travel far, and got lost in a gutter

"I am too fine for this world," said she, as at last she sat still in the gutter "However, I know who I am, and there is always some little pleasure in that"

So she bore herself proudly, and did not lose her good humour

All sorts of things floated over her—chips and straws and bits of newspaper "See how they sail along!" said the darning needle "They do not know what is under them! Here I am, and here I shall stick There goes a chip, which thinks of nothing in the world but itself, chip as it is! There now is a straw floating by, how it turns and twists itself about! Don't think so much of yourself or you may float against one of the stones There swims a piece of newspaper everything in it is forgotten, yet what airs it gives itself! I sit here patiently and quietly I know what I am, and that I shall remain!"

One day there chanced to be close by her something that glittered so charmingly that the darning needle felt sure it must be a diamond, though it was only a piece of a broken bottle The darning needle spoke to it because it sparkled, introducing herself as a breastpin "Surely you are a diamond?" she said

"Why, yes, something of the sort!" was the reply, and so each believed the other to be some very rare and costly trinket, and they both began to complain of the world, and of the conceited people in it

"Yes, I have dwelt in a box belonging to a young lady," said the darning needle, "and this lady was the cook She had five fingers on each hand, and anything so conceited as those five fingers I have never seen And, after all, what had they to be proud of They were good for nothing but to hold me, to take me out of the box, and lay me back in it!"

"There sails an egg-shell!" said the boys, and they stuck the darning needle into the shell

"White walls and a lady in black," said the darning needle, "that is very striking Now everyone can see me But I hope I shall not be seasick, for then I shall break" Her fear was needless, she was not seasick, neither did she break "Nothing is so good to prevent seasickness as being of steel, and then, too, never to forget that one is a little more than man Now my trial is over The finer one is, the more one can endure"

Crash went the egg-shell A wagon rolled over it "Ugh, what a pressure!" sighed the darning needle, "now I shall be seasick after all I shall break, I shall break!" But she broke not, although the wheel had passed over her. Long did she lie there—and there let her die!



THE BOYS STICK THE DARNING NEEDLE INTO THE EGG SHELL

that these snails were cooked, and then became black, and were laid upon silver dishes, but what happened afterwards they did not know. Nor could they imagine how they would feel when cooked and laid on silver dishes, but they were certain that it was very delightful, and a very great honour. Neither the cockchafer, nor the toad, nor the earthworm, whom they questioned could give them any information on the subject, for not one of these had ever been cooked or laid on a silver dish. These old white snails were the grandest creatures in the world, they were quite sure of that. The burdock wood had grown up solely on their account, and the manor house stood beyond, merely that they might some day be taken there, cooked, and laid on silver dishes.

They now lived a very lonely and yet a very happy life, and, as they had no children of their own, they had taken a liking to a little common snail, and brought it up as their own child. This little snail would not grow, for he was only a common black snail, and not like his foster parents, but the mother snail insisted that she could see he was growing fast, and she begged the father snail, since he could not see it, to touch the little snail's house and feel it. And the father snail felt the house, and found that the mother was in the right.

One day there was a heavy shower of rain. "Only listen, what a drum-drum-drumming there is on the burdock leaves!" said father snail.

"There come the drops," said the mother snail, "they are running down the stalk, you will see it quite wet presently. I am glad we have our own good houses, and that the little one too is safe in his. It cannot be denied that more has been done for us than for all other creatures put together, it is easily seen that we are of the first importance in the world. We have houses from our birth, and the burdock wood has been planted for our sakes. I should rather like to know, though, how far it stretches, and what is beyond it."

"There can be nothing beyond better than this," said the father snail, "we have nothing left to wish for."

"I cannot say that," replied mother snail. "I own I should like to go up to the manor house, and be cooked and laid in

THE HAPPY FAMILY

THE largest green leaves that you can find in the country are the burdock leaves, if a little girl takes one of them and holds it in front of the skirt of her frock, it serves her as an apron, and if she places it on her head, it is almost as good a shelter against the rain as an umbrella, it is so very large. Never is a burdock leaf found growing alone, wherever one grows a whole colony grows. They are beautiful too, but all their beauty is for the snails. Those large white snails, of which great folks in olden time made fricassees, dined off the burdock leaves. They ate greedily of them, saying all the while, "Hum, how nice, how exquisite!" for they thought the snails delicious. These snails lived upon burdock leaves, and they imagined the burdock leaves had been sown for their sakes.

There was an oldfashioned manor house where snails were no longer cooked and eaten, because not only had the custom died away, but the owners of the house had died, and no one lived in it. But burdock leaves grew near, and they had not died. They grew and multiplied, and as there was no one to weed them out, they spread over all the paths and all the beds till the garden at last became a wilderness of burdock leaves. Here and there might still be seen a solitary apple or plum tree, otherwise no one could possibly have guessed that this had ever been a garden, for on all sides you saw nothing but burdock leaves.

Among the leaves there dwelt two old snails, the last of their race. They themselves could not tell how old they were, but they could remember that their family had once been very numerous, that they belonged to a foreign colony, and that for them the whole grove had been planted. Beyond the burdock grove they had never been, but they knew that there was another place in the world called the manor house, and

She lives alone, poor thing! like a hermitess, and she is quite old enough to marry. It is only a hundred man steps from here '

"Well, then, let her come to him," said the old snails, "that will be most fitting. He has a burdock grove, she has only a gooseberry bush."

And so the guats brought the little lady snail. Eight days passed before she came, which showed that she was of the right breed. And then the wedding was held. Six glow-worms shone as brightly as they could, otherwise the whole affair passed off very quietly, for neither of the old snails could endure merriment and rioting. Indeed, the father snail was too much moved to be able to say a word; but the mother snail made a most beautiful and affecting speech at the breakfast, and they gave the two young people the whole burdock grove for their inheritance, and declared, as they had always held, that it was the best place in the world. They said that if they lived together peaceably and honestly, and multiplied in the grove, they and their children should at last be taken to the manor house, there to be cooked till they were black, and then be laid on silver dishes.

After this speech the two old snails crept back into their houses and never came out again, there they slept. And the young snails reigned in the burdock wood in their stead, and had a great many children. But they never had the good fortune to be cooked, or to be put on silver dishes, and so they concluded that the manor house must have fallen to pieces, and that all the human beings in the world must be dead. No one ever contradicted them, and therefore they thought they must be right. And for their sakes the raindrops beat upon the burdock leaves, and made drum music, and for their sakes the sun shone on the burdock leaves, giving them a bright-green colour. And they were very happy, and the whole snail family was very happy.

a silver dish. All our forefathers went there, and only think what an honour it must be!"

"Most likely the manor house is in ruins," said father snail, "or else the burdock grove has grown over it, so that the human beings cannot now get out of it to fetch us. However, there is no need to be in such a violent hurry about everything as you are, and the little one too in that matter begins to take after you. Why, he has crept all up the stalk in less than three days, it makes me quite dizzy to look at him!"

"Don't scold him," said mother snail, "he crawls so carefully. We shall have great pride and pleasure in him, and what else have we old folk got to live for? But we ought to think now of where we are to get him a wife? Don't you think that far out in the burdock grove there may perhaps be a few more of our family left?"

"There are black snails, no doubt, in plenty," replied the other, "black snails without houses, but they are so vulgar and so conceited. I'll tell you what we can do: we can commission the ants to look about for us. They are always running backwards and forwards, as if all the business in the world had to be done by them, they must certainly know of a fit wife for our youngster."

"To be sure, we know where there is the loveliest little creature in the world!" said five or six ants, who were passing by just then. "But perhaps she may not choose to listen to the proposal, for she is a Queen."

"What does that matter?" answered the two old snails. "Has she a house? That is much more to the purpose."

"She has a palace," replied the ants, "a most magnificent ant-palace, with seven hundred passages."

"Oh, thank you!" said the mother snail. "If you fancy our son is going to live in an anthill, you are mistaken. If you have no better proposal to make than that, we can give the commission to the white gnats, they fly about in rain and in sunshine, and know every corner of the burdock grove."

"Oh yes, we know the very wife for him!" said the gnats, on being asked about the matter. "A hundred men steps off there sits, on a gooseberry bush, a little snail with a house

of Christina, so the little gul was always with him in the boat, or in the wood among the heather and the bilberry bushes. When he was obliged to go up to the village he sometimes brought little Christina, who was a year younger than little Ib, away across the heath to Jeppe Jans.

Ib and Christina agreed on every point. They shared their bread and their berries when they were hungry, they dug in the earth together, they ran and crept and played everywhere together. One day they ventured, all by themselves, as far as the great ridge, and a good distance into the wood. Once they found some snipes' eggs, and this was a great event.

Ib had never yet been on the heath where Christina's father lived, and had not sailed on the river, but at last that came to pass also. Christina's father had invited him to go for a sail, and the evening before he accompanied him home across the heath to his house.

Next morning early both the children were perched high up in the boat on the piles of timber, eating bread and bilberries. Christina's father and his assistant pushed the boat forward with poles. They had the current with them, and floated on swiftly, passing lakes formed by the stream, which looked as if they were quite enclosed by wood and banks of reeds and rushes, but a passage always appeared, even when the old trees leant over the waters, and the oaks stretched out their bare branches as if they had turned up their shirt sleeves and wanted to show their naked knotty arms. Old alders, which the stream had loosened from the riverside, clung tightly with their roots to the soil of the bank, and looked like tiny wooded isles, the water lilies rocked on the current. It was a beautiful sail! And at last they reached the great eel weir, where the water rushed through the locks. Both Ib and Christina thought that was very beautiful.

At that time there was no factory and no village, only the great old farm with its poor bearing land and a few labourers. Not many cattle were to be seen there, and the rush of the water through the locks, and the cry of the wild ducks, formed the only signs of life about Silkeborg. While the firewood was being unloaded, Christina's father bought himself a bunch of eels and a sucking pig, which were all put

IB AND LITTLE CHRISTINA

Nor far from the clear stream, the Gudenau, in North Jutland, in the wood which covers the country far and wide to the river banks, there rises a great ridge which stretches like a wall through the wood. To the west of this lies a farmhouse surrounded by such poor land, that the sandy soil shows through the scanty blades of rye and barley which grow in it. Some years ago the people who lived here tilled the ground, and had also three sheep, a pig, and two oxen. They made a fair living, had indeed quite enough for their wants if they were content to take things as they were. They might, in truth, have been able to keep two horses, but they said, like the other peasants of the neighbourhood, "The horse eats his head off, he eats as much as he earns." Jeppe Jans worked his land in summer. In winter he made clogs, and then he had also an assistant, a lad who, like himself, knew how to make the wooden shoes strong but light, and of a good shape. They carved shoes and spoons, and that brought in money. You would have done Jeppe Jans an injustice if you had called him and his family poor people.

Little Ib, the seven-year-old boy, the only child of the house, sat by and watched the workers. He would carve at a stick, and sometimes he would cut his finger, but one day he succeeded so far as to make two pieces of wood look like little clogs, and these he wanted to give as a present to little Christina. Who was little Christina? She was the boatman's little daughter, delicate and dainty as a gentleman's child. Had her dress been different, no one would have believed that she came from the hut on the neighbouring heath. Her father lived there. He was a widower, and got his living by carrying firewood in his great boat from the wood to the neighbouring estate of Silkeborg, with its magnificent eel pond and eel weir, and he went also to the distant village of Randers. He had nobody who could have taken charge

they both sank down in a thicket Christina cried and Ib cried, and when they had had a good cry they lay down on the withered leaves and fell asleep

The sun was high in the heavens when the two children awoke They were chilled, but near their resting-place, on a hillock, the sun was shining through the trees They would go there to get warm again, and from there Ib thought they would be able to see his parents' house However, they were far away from the house, in quite a different part of the forest They clambered up this hill and found themselves on a slope opposite a clear transparent lake There were swarms of fish at the surface of the water, sparkling in the sunbeams, the whole sight came upon them suddenly and unexpectedly Close to them was a hazel tree covered with beautiful nuts, so they plucked the nuts, cracked them, and ate the sweet young kernels which were only just ripening But there was a surprise and a fright in store for them Out of the bushes stepped a tall old woman with very black and shining hair, the white of her eyes like a Moor's On her back she carried a bundle, in her hand a knotty stick She was a gipsy

At first the children did not understand what she said She pulled three big nuts out of her pocket In these lay the most splendid and beautiful things, for they were wishing nuts

Ib looked at her She spoke so kindly that he plucked up courage and asked if she meant to give him the nuts The woman gave them to him, and pulled quite a pocketful of others for herself from the hazel bushes

Ib and Christina looked at the three wishing nuts with wide open eyes

"Is there really a carriage with two horses inside this nut?" asked Ib

"Yes, there is a golden carriage with golden horses inside it!" said the woman

"Then give me the nut," said Christina, and Ib gave it to her, and the strange woman tied the nut in her neckerchief

"Is there really inside this nut a pretty little cloth like the one which Christina has round her neck?" asked Ib

into a basket and placed at the back of the boat. Then they set off again back up the stream, but the wind was favourable, and the sail was hoisted, which was as good as having two horses yoked to the boat.

As they happened to come opposite to where the boatman's assistant lived, only a short way inland from the bank, the boat was moored, and the two men landed, after they had first bidden the children to keep quite still. But the children after a very short time forgot to do this, they must have just a peep into the basket where the eels and the pig were, and they wanted to hold the pig in their hands and touch it and feel it. They both wanted to do this at the same time, with the result that they let the pig fall into the water, and off it floated with the current! This was a terrible disaster. Ib jumped out and ran away a little distance from the boat, and Christina jumped after him. "Take me with you," she cried, and in a few moments they were deep in the under-wood, and could no longer see either the boat or the shore. They ran a little rather on, then Christina fell down and began to cry, but Ib lifted her up again.

"Follow me!" said he. "The house is over yonder." But the house was not over there, and they wandered still farther over the dry rustling last year's leaves, and over fallen branches that crackled under their little feet. Soon they heard a loud piercing cry, and they stood still and listened. Then the shriek of an eagle rang through the wood. It was an ugly cry, and they felt frightened by it, but in front of them within the wood there were growing the most lovely bilberries in great abundance. This was so tempting that they had to stop. So they stopped and ate the berries till they had blue mouths and blue cheeks. But now they again heard the same cry as before.

"We shall get into trouble about the pig," said Christina.

"Come, let us go to our house," said Ib, "it is here in the wood." So they went on farther. They came upon a driving road, but the road did not lead to the house, and it was getting dark, and they were afraid. The wonderful stillness which reigned all round them was broken by the hoarse cry of the great horned owl, or other bird. At last

and that it was real good fortune for her to fall into such good hands and to find a place with such excellent people "Only think," he said, "she is going to the rich innkeeper at Herning, far to the west, many miles away. Then she will assist the landlady and help in the house, and later, if she promises well and is confirmed and blessed there, the inn people will treat her as a daughter."

So Ib and Christina took leave of one another. "The Betrothed", people already called them, and she showed him at parting the two nuts he had given to her when they were lost in the wood, and told him as well that she had kept the little wooden shoes in her trunk, those that he had carved for her and given her when he was a boy. And then they parted.

Ib was confirmed. He remained in his mother's house, having become a skilful clogmaker. In summer he worked in the fields, for his mother no longer kept a farm servant, and Ib's father was long dead.

It was very seldom, and then generally through a postboy or an eel farmer, that any news came about Christina. However, she was getting on well with the rich innkeeper, and when she was confirmed she wrote a letter to her father, and in it a message to Ib and his mother. In the letter there was a mention of six new chemises and a beautiful dress, all of which had been presented to Christina by her master and mistress. This was certainly good news.

One day next spring there was a knock at Ib's old mother's door and look! in stepped the boatman and Christina. She had come to pay them a visit, and a carriage had been sent from the inn at Herning to the nearest village, and she had taken the opportunity to see her friends once again. She was as beautiful as a fine lady, and was dressed in pretty clothes nicely fitting, and indeed made to order for herself. She stood there in full dress, and Ib was in his everyday clothes. He could not utter a word, only he took her hand and held it fast in his. He was extremely glad, but he could not open his lips. Christina could, however, and she talked without ceasing, and even kissed Ib without any ceremony.

"Did you know me again at once, Ib?" she asked, but

"There are ten neckerchiefs in it!" said the woman
"There are fine dresses, stockings, a hat, and a veil in it!"

"I will have this one too," said Christina, and Ib gave her the second nut also. The third was a little black thing.

"You may keep that one," said Christina, "and it is quite pretty too."

"And what is inside it?" asked Ib.

"The best thing of all for you!" answered the gipsy, and Ib held the nut very tight. The woman promised she would take the children to the right path, so that they might find the way home, and then they went on, but certainly in quite another direction from that which they would have taken, but there was no reason to suspect that the old woman wanted to steal the children.

In the wild woodland path they met the forester, who knew Ib, and by his help Ib and Christina reached home safely. Everyone had been very anxious about them. They were freely forgiven, though both had all the same deserved what had happened—first because they had let the pig fall into the water, and next because they had run away.

Christina was taken to her father on the heath, and Ib stayed in the little farmhouse at the edge of the wood and of the great ridge. The first thing that he did in the evening was to take the little black nut out of his pocket, the one which was to hold "the best thing of all" within it. He laid it carefully down between the door and the doorpost, and then shut the door, and the nut was cracked directly. There was not much kernel to be seen in it—it was full of something like snuff or rich black earth, it was empty, or worm-eaten as it is called.

"Yes, I thought so," said Ib. "How could there be room in this little nut for the best thing of all?" Christina will get no more out of her two nuts—neither fine dresses nor a golden carriage."

Winter came and New Year, and several years passed.

At last Ib was to be confirmed and blessed. He went therefore one winter to the pastor away over in the village to be prepared. About this time the boatman one day visited Ib's parents, and told them that Christina was going to service,

with Christina. She was now a very pretty girl, and was much courted and beloved. The innkeeper's son was on a visit home. He had a very good position in an office in Copenhagen, and he liked Christina very much, she too thought him very nice. His parents were not unwilling to let their son marry her, only it weighed on Christina's heart that Ib might think hardly of her, and she had thought so much of this. "She might refuse her good fortune," said the boatman.

At first Ib said nothing, but he grew as white as the wall, shook his head a little, and then the first thing he said was "Christina must not refuse this good fortune!"

"Well, write her a line," said the boatman.

And Ib sat down to write, but he did not succeed in putting the words as he wished, and he erased and tore it up. However, next morning a letter to Christina lay ready, and here it is.

"——I have read the letter which you wrote to your father, and I see from it that you are getting on well, and that something still better is offered to you. Ask your own heart, Christina, and consider carefully what to expect if you take me, for what I have is very little. Do not think of me, or of my feelings, but think only of your own eternal welfare. You are bound to me by no promise, and if you have given me one in your heart, I release you from it. May all fulness of joy be yours, Christina! God will know how to shed consolation in my heart. Ever your sincere friend, IB."

The letter was sent, and Christina received it in due course.

During November her banns were published in the church on the heath and yonder in Copenhagen, where the bridegroom lived, and she travelled to Copenhagen along with her mother-in-law, because on account of his business the bridegroom could not undertake the long journey down so far into Jutland. Christina met her father at one of the villages on the way, and they took leave of each other there. Of this a few words were occasionally spoken, but Ib said nothing about it, he had become very thoughtful, his old mother said. Yes, indeed, he had become thoughtful, and so there came to his mind the three nuts which had been

even afterwards, when they were alone together, he still stood holding her hand in his, and could only say "You have become just like a fine lady, and I look so rough and common! How often I have thought of you, Christina, and of the old times!"

And arm in arm they wandered up to the great ridge, and looked over the stream towards the heath and the big hillocks overgrown with broom, but Ib said nothing. Still, when they separated, it was clear to him that Christina must be his wife. They had been called "The Betrothed" from their childhood, they were the betrothed couple, so it seemed to him, even if neither of them had ever spoken of it.

They could only remain a few hours together, for Christina had to return to the village, where the carriage was to start next morning in good time for Herning. Her father and Ib went with her to the village. It was a beautiful moonlight evening, and when they reached the village, and Ib still held Christina's hand in his, he could hardly let it go. His eyes shone, but he could scarcely utter the words which yet came from the very depths of his heart when he said "If you have not become too grand, and if you can see your way to live with me in my mother's house as my wife, we will some day be husband and wife!—but we can let it stand for a little time yet."

"Oh yes, let us wait a little longer, Ib," said she, while she pressed his hand and he kissed her lips. "I trust you, Ib," said Christina, "and I believe that I love you too, but I will sleep upon it."

Then they parted. On the way back Ib told the boatman that he and Christina were as good as engaged, and the boatman said that was just what he had always supposed. He went home with Ib for the evening, and remained overnight there. And no more was said of the betrothal at that time.

A year passed, during which two letters were exchanged between Ib and Christina. "True till death", ran the signature. One day the boatman came to Ib bringing him a message from Christina. He certainly rather hesitated in proceeding with the rest of his information, only it came to this, that things were going well, indeed more than well,

'The best!' thought Ib "The best of everything, and in the earth Now if this really is the best, the gipsy woman was right in what she foretold for me"

Ib went in the ferry boat from Aarhus to Copenhagen This seemed like a voyage over the ocean to the man who had only once or twice sailed on the river near his home At last he reached Copenhagen

The value of the gold he had found was paid to him It was a large sum—six hundred thaler Then Ib of the heath strolled about the big city

On the evening before the day on which he had decided to set out for home, Ib lost himself in the streets, and took a different direction from the one he had meant to follow He had wandered into the suburb of Christianshafen, into a poor side street There was no one to be seen At last a very small girl came out of one of the wretched houses Ib asked the little one the way to the street he wanted, but she looked at him shyly and wept bitterly So now he asked her what ailed her, and she gave him an unintelligible answer For a little they walked along the street, and then both stopped under a lamp whose light fell right on the girl's face, and Ib had an extraordinary impression It was as if Christina in the body was standing before him just as he remembered her in their childhood

He accompanied the little girl into the wretched house, and mounted the narrow rickety staircase which led to a little attic room high up, with a sloping roof Inside the air was close and almost stifling There was no light, but in the corner there was a sound of moaning and of heavy breathing Ib struck a match, and saw that it was the child's mother who lay moaning on a miserable bed

"Can I be of any service to you?" asked Ib "The little one brought me up, but I am a stranger to the city Are there no neighbours or anyone I could call?" He raised the sick woman's head and arranged the pillow

It was Christina of the heath

For years her name had not been mentioned, it would have troubled Ib's peace of mind, and what rumour had truthfully to tell of her was not good news The wealth which her

presented to him by the gipsy woman, two of which he had given to Christina. They were wishing nuts; in one of hers lay a golden carriage with golden horses, and in the other the most lovely dresses. They were quite correct. She now had all this splendour away there in the capital. It had all come true to her. On him, Ib, the nut had only bestowed black earth. The gipsy woman had said "the best thing of all" for him, yes, truly, that was coming true for him too! The black earth was the best thing for him. Now he understood clearly what the woman had meant. The black earth, the darkness of the grave, would be the best of all for him!

Years passed away, not many indeed, but long years, so they seemed to Ib. The old inn people died, one after the other, and the whole property, many thousand thaler, went to the son. Yes, indeed, Christina could easily have the golden carriage now, and the fine dresses.

During the two long years that followed there came no letter from Christina, and when at last her father received one, it did not altogether tell of prosperity and happiness. Poor Christina! Neither she nor her husband understood how to take care of their wealth. There was no blessing in it, because they had asked for no blessing with it.

The heather bloomed and withered again. For many winters the snow covered the heath and the ridge beneath which Ib lived to shelter from the harsh winds. The spring sunshine appeared, and Ib was driving his plough through his field, when it struck, as he supposed, on a flint, and out came a big black splinter from the ground. When Ib lifted it, it was metal, and the place where the plough had cut it sparkled in his eyes. It was a big heavy gold bangle of antique form. He had laid open a giant's grave and had uncovered his precious ornaments. Ib showed it to the pastor, who explained to him what a valuable find he had made. Then Ib betook himself to the magistrate, who informed the curator of the museum of the discovery, and advised Ib to bring the treasure in person.

"You have found in the earth the very best thing you could find," said the magistrate.

vision vanishes from child and grown-up alike. Ib sat within the pretty bright house, a prosperous man. The little girl's mother rested in the churchyard at Copenhagen—she had died in poverty.

Ib had money—he had made his fortune—and he had Christina too, after all.

IB AND LITTLE CHRISTINA

husband had inherited from his parents had led him astray and made him proud. He had given up his good situation and gone travelling for six months in foreign countries, and after he returned had contracted debts and lived in great style. The coach tilted over more and more, and at last it overturned. His many gay friends and boon companions said that it served him right, he had entertained like a madman! One morning his body was found in the canal.

Death had already laid his hand on Christina. Her youngest child, only a few weeks old, born when they were passing from prosperity to misery, was already buried, and now Christina was so far spent that she lay sick to death and deserted in this pitiful room. Such poverty she might indeed have been able to endure in her younger days, but now, accustomed to better things, she felt it a grievous burden. It was her eldest child, her little Christina, who shared her hunger and poverty, and who had brought Ib to her.

"I am so anxious because I am dying, and the poor child will be left alone here," she moaned. "Oh! what will become of her?" And she could say no more.

Ib got out another match and lit a candle end which he found in the room, the flame lighted up the poor dwelling.

Then he looked at the little girl and thought of Christina when she was young. For her sake might he not be able to care for the child whom he did not know? The dying woman looked at him—her eyes seemed to stare at him. Did she know him? He could not tell, for no word passed her lips.

In the forest by the river Gudenau near the heath the air was close and dark, there was no bloom to be seen on the heather. Autumn storms cast the yellow leaves of the wood out on to the river and over the heath to the boatman's hut, where strangers lodged now, but under the ridge, nicely sheltered by the high trees, stood the little farmhouse newly whitewashed and painted. Inside the peat blazed cheerfully on the hearth. Inside there was sunshine, the happy light of childish eyes. The song of larks in spring seemed to echo in the prattle of the child's rosy smiling lips. Life and joy were the masters here, with Christina sitting on Ib's knee. Ib was father and mother to her. Her own parents had vanished as a dream.





THE THREE WISHING NUTS

his arm round it, laid his mouth to its shining snout, and drank the fresh water in great gulps. Close by lay a few lettuce leaves and a couple of chestnuts, which would make his supper. There was not a soul besides himself in the street. It belonged to him alone, and confidently he sat down on the back of the Metal Pig, leant forward so that his curly head rested on the beast's head, and before he knew where he was he fell fast asleep.

It was midnight. The Metal Pig stirred, he distinctly heard it say "Hold fast, you little boy, for now I am going off", and away he ran with him. It was a wonderful ride — First they reached the Piazza del Granduca, and the metal horse which bears the statue of the Grand Duke neighed aloud, the gay coats of arms on the old town hall looked like transparent pictures, and Michael Angelo's David swung his sling. Some strange kind of life was stirring! The bronze groups, among them those which represent Perseus and the Rape of the Sabines, looked as if they were alive. A shriek of terror came from the Sabine women and rang across the magnificent square.

At the arcades of the Palazzo degli Uffizi, where the nobles gather for the carnival amusements, the Metal Pig stopped.

"Hold fast," said the creature, "hold fast, for now I am going up the steps!" The little one said never a word, he was half pleased and half afraid.

They went through a long gallery where the child had been before. The walls were crowded with paintings. Statues and busts were standing about. Everything was seen in the most beautiful light, as if it were broad day, but the most splendid thing of all came in sight when the door of one of the side rooms opened. The little boy remembered the glorious thing he had seen there, but to-night everything was unusually brilliant.

Here stood a beautiful, a most beautiful woman's figure, such as only nature or the greatest sculptor could have formed. The lovely limbs moved, dolphins leaped at her feet, and immortality shone from her eyes. The world calls her the Venus de Medici. At her side were marble statues in which the spirit of life breathed in the stone. There were

THE METAL PIG

In the city of Florence, not far from the Piazza del Granduca, there runs a little cross street which is called, I think, Porta Rosa. In this street, in front of a kind of market hall where vegetables are sold, there stands a pig curiously wrought out of metal. Fresh clear water gushes from the mouth of the creature, which has grown green with age, but the snout shines as if it were polished, as indeed it is, by the many hundreds of children and beggars who lay their hands on it and put their mouths to the animal's snout to drink. It is quite a pretty picture to see the shapely beast clasped by a pretty half-naked boy, his dainty fresh lips laid close to the pig's snout.

Anyone who visits Florence can easily find the place. Ask the first beggar you meet the way to the Metal Pig, and he will point it out to you.

It was late one winter evening. The hills were covered with snow, but it was moonlight, and by moonlight in Italy it is as light as on a dull northern winter day, or lighter, for the air sparkles and enlivens us, while in the north the cold grey leaden sky weighs us down to the earth, to the cold damp earth which will one day become our bed and covering.

In the castle garden of the Grand Duke, under a roof of pines, where a thousand roses bloom in the winter time, a little ragged boy had been sitting the whole day, a boy who might have passed for a type of Italy, pretty, smiling, and at the same time suffering. He was hungry and thirsty, but no one offered him anything, and when it grew dark and the garden would soon be shut, the keeper turned him out. He stood for a long time in deep thought on the bridge over the Arno, and gazed at the stars reflected in the water between him and the splendid Della Trinita bridge.

He took the road to the Metal Pig, half knelt down, threw

hot charcoal, a *marmito* as it is called. She took this in her hands and warmed them, and pushing the boy with her elbow, she said, "Oh, of course you have money!"

The boy wept, and she kicked him with her foot. He wailed aloud. "Will you be quiet, or do you want me to break your screeching head?" she yelled, and she swung the pot which she held in her hand. The boy cowered to the ground with a shriek. Then a neighbour came in at the door, she too had her *marmito* on her arm.

"Felicità! what are you doing to the child?"

"The child is mine," answered Felicità. "I can murder him if I like, and you too, Giannina!" and she swung her pot. The other raised hers in defence, and both pots knocked so violently against each other that the fragments, fire and ashes, flew all over the room. But in an instant the boy, seizing the chance, was out of the door, across the court, and out of the house. Poor child! he ran till he had no more breath. He stopped at the church whose great doors had opened to him the previous night, and he went in. Here it was bright, and he knelt down at the foot of the first monument on the right. It was the tomb of Michael Angelo, and soon the child was sobbing aloud. People came and went, mass was sung, but no one noticed the lad, only an old citizen stood still and looked at him, and then went off like the rest. Hunger and thirst tormented the child. He was quite worn out and ill. He crept into a corner between the marble monuments and fell asleep. It was towards evening when he was awakened by a tug. He started up, and found that the same old citizen who had stopped to look at him in the morning was standing in front of him.

"Are you ill, child? Where do you live? Have you been here the whole day?" These are some of the many questions the old man put to him. He answered them, and the old man took him with him to his little house close by in a side street. They stepped into a glovemaker's workshop, the wife was sitting busily stitching when they entered. A little white dog, so closely shaven that you could see his pink skin, skipped on to the table and began to show off his tricks to the little boy.

very fine figures of men. One of them, who whets a sword, is called the Grinder. The wrestling gladiators form another group. The sword had been sharpened, and they were fighting for the goddess of beauty.

The boy was almost blinded with all this splendour. The walls were radiant with colour, and all was life and movement. The picture of Venus seemed to be reproduced everywhere, the earthly Venus, so yielding, so passionate, as Titian pressed her to his heart. It was a wondrous sight. There were also two fair women whose lovely limbs were stretched on soft cushions. They breathed and moved their heads, so that their wealth of hair fell over their rounded shoulders, while their dark eyes expressed the glowing thoughts of their race. But none of the pictures dared to step quite beyond its frame. The goddess of beauty herself, the gladiators, and the Grinder remained in their places, for the glory which streamed from the Madonna, from Jesus and John, kept them in awe. The sacred pictures were no longer pictures, they were the holy ones themselves.

What splendour and beauty they saw as they passed from hall to hall! The child saw everything. The Metal Pig went step by step all through this scene of grandeur and magnificence. Sight crowded upon sight, but one picture imprinted itself deeply upon his young soul, and that especially because of the joyous happy children it depicted. The boy had once seen this picture by daylight.

Many people pass the picture without noticing it, and yet it is a treasure house of poetry. It is a picture of Christ gone down into Hades, but they are not the lost who are seen there, no, they are merely the heathen. The painter is the Florentine Angiolo Bronzino. Most charming is the expression of the children, full of trust that they will all go to heaven. Two little ones are embracing each other. One little thing gives his hand to another lower down and points to himself, as if he were saying, "I shall go to heaven!" The older people are doubtful, or merely hoping, or bending meekly to adore the Lord Jesus. The boy's look rested longer on this picture than on any of the others, and the Metal Pig stood still before it. A gentle sigh was heard

And now they stopped before Bionzino's picture, in which Christ descends to Hades, and the children surround him smiling in sweet anticipation of heaven. The poor child smiled too, for here he was in his heaven!

"You may go home now," said the painter, for the boy had stood till he had set up his easel.

"May I see you paint?" asked the boy. "May I watch to see how you put the picture on to this white canvas?"

"I am not going to paint yet," answered the man, and took up his charcoal. His hand moved quickly, his eye measured the big picture, and though only faint lines were visible, the Christ hovered there as on the coloured picture.

"You had better go!" said the painter, and the boy went quietly home, sat down to the table, and—learnt to stitch gloves.

But all day long his thoughts were in the picture gallery, and so he pricked his fingers and was altogether awkward, though he did not tease Bellissima. When evening came, and the house door was standing open, he slipped out. It was rather cold, but a beautiful clear night. The streets were already empty, and he was soon in front of the Metal Pig. He stooped over it, kissed its smooth snout, and got upon its back. "You blessed creature," said he, "how I have been longing for you! We must have a ride to-night."

The Metal Pig stood motionless, and the fresh stream gushed from his snout. The little boy sat astride him, then something pulled at his dress. He looked down. Bellissima, the little smooth-shaven, was barking as if to say, "Look, I am here too! What are you doing sitting here?" No fiery dragon could have frightened the boy as much as the little dog in this place. Bellissima in the street, and that too without being dressed, as the old mother called it! What would be the end of this? The dog was only allowed outside in winter when it had on a little lambskin coat which had been cut and sewn together for it. The skin was adorned with rosettes and bells, and was fastened with a red ribbon round its neck and under its body. The dog looked like a little kid when it had leave

"Innocent souls recognize one another," said the wife, and caressed both dog and boy. The good people gave him food and drink, and said he might stay the night with them. On the next day father Giuseppe would speak to his mother. A homely little bed was given to him, but it seemed regal and splendid to him who had so often been obliged to sleep on the hard stone floor. He slept sweetly, and dreamt of the lovely pictures and of the Metal Pig.

Father Giuseppe went out the next morning. The poor child was not very cheerful about this, for he knew that the old man had gone out to see his mother, and that he might be taken back to her. The boy kissed the lively little dog, and the woman looked kindly on both of them.

What answer did father Giuseppe bring back? Well, he talked for a long time with his wife, and she nodded her head and stroked the boy. "He is a capital boy!" she said. "He may make a fine glovemaker, like yourself. See what delicate, supple fingers he has! Madonna intended him for a glove-maker." So the boy remained with them, and the good woman herself taught him to sew. He ate well, slept well, and became quite lively. But when he began to tease Bellissima, as the little dog was called, the glover's wife was angry, and scolded and threatened him. This made the boy very unhappy, and he sat sad and downhearted in his little room, which looked out on to the street in which skins for the gloves were hung to dry, and there were thick iron bars across his window. He could not sleep, and he was always thinking of the Metal Pig. Suddenly he heard it outside—pit-a-pat, pit-a-pat! That was certainly a pig! He rushed to the window, but there was nothing to be seen, it was gone already.

"Help the gentleman to carry his paint box!" said the mistress of the house the following morning to the boy, when the young painter, her neighbour, passed carrying the box and a big roll of canvas. The boy took the box and followed the painter. They took the road to the gallery and went up the same staircase, well known to him from his ride that night on the Metal Pig. He knew the statues and pictures again—the beautiful Venus in marble, and the other in colour. He saw again the Madonna with Jesus and John.

painter comforted the little fellow, and tried to soothe the old woman. She would not be calmed till the father arrived with Bellissima. What rejoicing there was then! The painter caressed the boy, and gave him quite a handful of pictures. Oh, what splendid pictures they were, with funny heads! And would you believe it?—The Metal Pig himself was among them. Oh, nothing could be more glorious! With a couple of strokes there it stood on the paper, and even the house that lay behind it was sketched in.

Anybody who could draw and paint could gather the whole world around him!

In his first solitary moment during the next day the little fellow seized a pencil and tried to copy the drawing of the Metal Pig on the blank side of one of his pictures, and succeeded. Somewhat crooked indeed it was—rather up and down, one leg thick and another thin—but it was quite recognizable, and the boy was rather pleased with it. Only the pencil would not go just exactly as it should have done, he saw that well enough. Next day there was a second Metal Pig by the side of the first, and this was a hundred times better. The third was so good that everyone might have known it.

But things were going badly with the old glovemaker. The orders in the town were not delivered promptly, for the Metal Pig had taught the boy that any picture could be put upon paper, and the town of Florence is a picture book, if you will only turn over the leaves. On the Piazza Della Trinità is a slender pillar on which stands the goddess of justice with her eyes blindfolded and the scales in her hand. Soon she was on paper too, and it was the little glovemaker's lad who placed her there. The collection of pictures increased, but as yet it contained only lifeless objects. One day Bellissima was frisking before him. "Stand still!" said he, "and you will soon become beautiful, and be put into my picture collection." But Bellissima would not stand still, she had to be tied up. Head and tail were tied—she yelped, and jumped, and strained the cords tight. And in came the dog's mistress!

"You wicked boy. Poor little beast!" was all she could utter. She pushed the boy aside, thrust him away with her

to trot out in winter with its mistress in this costume Bellissima was outside and not dressed! What *would* be the end of it? All the boy's fancies vanished, he kissed the Metal Pig and took Bellissima in his arms. The creature was shivering with cold, so the boy ran as fast as he could.

"What are you running away with there?" called out two policemen whom he met, and at whom Bellissima barked. "Where did you steal the pretty little dog?" they asked, taking it from him.

"Oh," begged the child, "please give it back to me."

"If you have not stolen it, you can tell them at home that the dog can be sent for to the police station."

They told him where it was, and went off with Bellissima. This was a terrible trouble. The boy hardly knew whether to jump into the Aino or to go home and tell the truth. They would be sure to kill him, he thought. But I would gladly be killed, then I should die and go to Jesus and the Madonna! And he went home mainly in order to be killed!

The door was shut, and he could not reach the knocker. There was no one in the street, but he picked up a stone and thundered at the door with it. "Who is there?" called somebody inside.

"It is I," he said, "Bellissima is gone. Open the door and then you can kill me."

Such a panic as there was then, the good wife being especially concerned for poor Bellissima. She looked at once at the wall where the dog's coat always hung, and there was the little lambskin.

"Bellissima at the police station!" she cried furiously. "You wicked child! How did you entice her out! She will be frozen to death! That tender creature with those rough policemen!"

The father had to go off at once to the police office, the wife lamented and the boy wept. The neighbours gathered together, and among them was the young painter. He took the boy between his knees and questioned him. Bit by bit he drew from him the whole story of the Metal Pig and the gallery. It was quite clear and easy to understand. The

SOUP FROM A SAUSAGE SKEWER

I

"That was a very good dinner we had yesterday!" said an old she-mouse to one who had not been at the feast. "I sat twenty-one down from the old King of the Mice. That was not being badly placed, was it? Would you like to hear about the service? The courses were very well arranged: mouldy bread, bacon rind, tallow candle, and sausage, and then the same over again from the beginning. It was quite as good as if we had had two feasts. There was a great deal of pleasant humour and good-natured nonsense. It was just like a family party. Not the smallest scrap was left over, except the sausage skewers. Upon these the conversation turned, and in the course of the talk 'sausage-skin soup' was spoken of, or, as the proverb has it in a neighbouring country, 'soup from a sausage skewer'. Now, though nobody had tasted the soup, much less prepared it, everybody had heard it spoken about. A charming toast, therefore, was drunk to the inventor of the soup. He ought, some one said, to be on the Board of Guardians! That was witty, was it not? Then the old King of the Mice rose and promised that whichever of the young mice prepared the much-talked-of soup most daintily should be his queen. He gave her the space of a year and a day to do it in."

"That was not at all a bad thing to do," said the other mouse. "But how is the soup made?"

"Yes, how is it made?"—the other lady-mice, old and young, asked that question too. They would all have liked very much to be queen, but they were unwilling to take the trouble of going out into the wide world to learn how to prepare the soup, and that *must needs be done first*. But it is not everyone who would care to quit their family and their old haunts even to be made a queen. Cheese pairings are not

foot, drove him from the house as a thankless, wicked ne'er-do-weel, and weeping kissed her little half-strangled Bellissima. At this very moment the painter was coming up the stair, and this is the turning-point of the story.

In the year 1834 there was an Exhibition in Florence in the Academy of the Fine Arts. Two pictures hung close together attracted a crowd of spectators. The smaller represented a jolly little boy sitting drawing. His model was a little white poodle curiously shaven, but the creature would not stand still, and was, therefore, also fastened with cord, head and tail. There was a life and truth in it which could not but interest everyone. It was said that the painter was a young Florentine who was picked up on the streets as a child, had been kindly treated by an old glovemakei, and had taught himself drawing. A painter now famous had discovered this talent when the boy was about to be sent away because he had tied up Madame's darling, the little poodle, and taken it for a model.

The glovemakei's lad had become a great painter, and exhibited this picture as well as the other larger one beside it. In this there was only a single figure, a beautiful boy dressed in rags. He was asleep on the street, leaning on the Metal Pig in the Porta Rosa. All the spectators knew the place. The child's arms rested on the Pig's head; the little thing was fast asleep. The lamp in front of the Madonna's statue threw a strong realistic light on the pale beautiful face of the child. It was a wonderful picture. A big gilt frame surrounded it, and at one corner was hung a laurel wreath, but among the green leaves was twisted a black ribbon, and a mourning streamer hung from it. The young artist had died—that very day!

does not learn how to cook soup out of a sausage skewer. We sailed for many nights and days, the ship rocked frightfully, and we did not get off without a wetting. When at last we reached the place to which we were bound, I left the vessel. It was in the far north.

"It is truly strange to come out of your own little corner at home, to go in a ship, which to a certain extent is also a kind of corner, and then suddenly to find yourself more than a hundred miles away, in a foreign country. I saw great, pathless forests of pine and birch, their scent was so strong, I sneezed, I thought of sausage. There were great lakes there too, then waters, seen close at hand, were quite clear, but from a distance they looked as black as ink. White swans floated on them. I thought it was foam—they lay so still, but I saw them fly and walk, and then I knew what they were. They belong to the goose family, that is easily seen from their walk. Nobody can disown his ancestry! I kept with my own kind, I made friends with the wood and field mice, who, however, know very little, especially as regards cookery, and it was just for that I was travelling abroad. The idea that a soup can be made out of a sausage skewer was to them so out of the way and unlikely, that it spread from one to another through the whole forest almost at once. They thought that there was not the smallest chance of the thing ever being done, and least of all did I myself think that there, and indeed during the first night, I was to be shown how the soup was made.

"It was midsummer, and the mice said that was why the forest scents were so strong, the herbs so sweet smelling, the lakes, with their white floating swans, so clear and yet so dark.

"On the edge of the wood, close to three or four houses, a pole as high as the mainmast of a ship was put up, and on its topmost point hung wreaths and fluttering ribbons. It was a maypole. Lads and lasses were dancing round the pole and singing as if for a wager to the musician's fiddle. All went merrily as the sun set and the moon rose, but I took no part in it. What has a little mouse to do with a maypole dance? I sat in the soft moss and clutched my sausage skewer. The moonbeams fell especially on one spot, where

to be had every day outside, nor does one smell bacon-rind every day. No one likes to bear hunger, or perhaps even to be eaten alive by a cat!

It was by such thoughts as these that the greater number of the lady mice let themselves be kept from going into the wide world to gain the needed knowledge. Only four mice came forward who were ready to undertake the journey. They were young and nimble, but poor. Each of them was to betake herself to one of the four quarters of the globe, and so it would then be seen which of them Fortune favoured. Each took with her a sausage skewer to remind her why she was travelling, and to be to her for a pilgrim's staff.

In the beginning of May they set out, and not till May of the following year did they return, and then only three came back. The fourth did not come forward, and not a word was heard of her, although the day of decision was close at hand.

"Yes, some grief is always mixed up with our greatest joy," said the King of the Mice, but he gave orders to invite all the mice within a circle of many miles. They were to assemble in the kitchen. The three travelled mice stood in a row apart, for the fourth, who was absent, a sausage skewer hung with black crape was stuck up. Nobody dared express his opinion until the King had spoken. He bade one of the travelled mice to go on with her story. What she said we shall now hear.

II

WHAT THE FIRST LITTLE MOUSE HAD SEEN AND LEARNT ON HER JOURNEY

"When I set out into the wide world," said the little mouse, "I fancied, as at my age many do, that I had already diamed the cup of knowledge, but it was not so. Years pass away ere one gets so far. I went at once to the sea and embarked on a ship, which steered for the north. I had been told that a ship's cook must know how to prepare every dish at sea. But it is an easy matter to cook dishes when there is no end of fitches of bacon and of great casks of pickled meat and mouldy flour. One lives delicately in such a case, but one

thrush At last the whole forest seemed to ring. There were children's voices, the ringing of bells, and the singing of birds—the most glorious melodies, and all this delightful music rang out from the Elves' maypole, which was in itself an entire chime of bells, and yet was my sausage skewer. I would never have believed so much could come out of it, but that, of course, depends on whose hands it falls into. I was touched, I wept, as a little mouse can, for pure pleasure.

The night was quite too short for me, for just at this season the nights are short up there. At daybreak came the sighing breezes, the surface of the woodland lake was ruffled, and all the pretty floating veils and banners fluttered away in the breeze. The swaying garlands of spider's web, the hanging bridges and balustrades, as they are called nowadays, flickered out as if they were nothing. Six Elves brought me back my sausage skewer, while at the same time they asked me if I cherished any wish which they could satisfy. Then I begged them to tell me how soup is made from a sausage skewer.

"How we do it?" said the chief of the Elves, and smiled. "That is what you have just seen! You hardly knew your own skewer!"

"You mean to say that is the way?" thought I, and told them simply why I was travelling, and what was hoped for at home from the discovery of how to make soup from a sausage skewer. "What good," I asked, "will it do to the King of the Mice and our whole mighty realm, my having seen this splendour? I cannot shake it out of the skewer and say 'See, here is the sausage skewer, now comes the soup!' That were at best a fit manner of serving, when one had already eaten enough!"

"Then the Elf dipped his little finger into the cup of a violet and said to me 'Watch! Thus I besmear your walking-stick, and when you enter your home in the castle of the King of the Mice, touch the warm breast of your King with the wand, and violets will spring up and cover the whole staff, even in the coldest winter. And so I have given you something to take home with you, and a little more than something!"

But before the little mouse told what this "little more"

a tree stood amidst unusually fine moss. Yes, I dare almost say it was as fine and soft as the coat of the King of the Mice, but it was of a green colour, which is good for the eyes.

All of a sudden I saw the most wonderful, charming little people marching towards me. They were so small that they only reached up to my knee. They looked like men, but were better proportioned. They were called Elves, and wore pretty clothes made of flower leaves trimmed with flies' and gnats' wings, which did not look amiss. From then appearance it was clear that they were looking for something, I did not know what. But at last some of them came towards me, and the most distinguished of them pointed to my skewer and said, 'It is just such a thing that we need! It is pointed, it is first-rate!' and the longer he looked at my stick the more delighted he was.

"'Oh, I will lend it to you, but not to keep!' said I.

"'We will not keep it,' they all cried, grasped the skewer, which I let go, and danced with it to the patch of fine moss, and there they set up the sausage skewer in the middle of the green. They too wanted to have a maypole, and the one they had now might have been cut on purpose for them. Next it was decorated. Yes, that really was a sight!

Little spiders covered it with webs of gold thread, and hung it with fluttering veils and banners, so finely woven, and bleached to such snowy whiteness in the moonlight, that my eyes were dazzled. They took colours from the wings of butterflies and strewed them over the white linen, and flowers and diamonds glittered on it, so that I did not recognize my own sausage skewer. Such another maypole as it had become was certainly not to be found in the whole world. And now came the real great company of Elves, who were without any clothing, nothing could be prettier, and I was invited to see the fête, but only from a certain distance, because I was too big for them.

Then the music began—such music! It was as if thousands of crystal bells were ringing, so full, and so loud I thought it was the Swans that were singing. Indeed, it seemed to me that I heard the voices of the cuckoo and the

III

WHAT THE SECOND LITTLE MOUSE HAD TO RELATE

"I was born in the castle library," said the next mouse. "I and several members of our family never had the good luck to be let into the dining-room, not to speak of the pantry. Only on my travels and here to-day have I got a sight of a kitchen. Often we in the library had actually to bear hunger, but we gained a great deal of knowledge. The report of the royal reward offered to whoever knew how to make soup from a sausage skewer reached us up there, and it was my old grandmother who sought out a manuscript which, it is true, she could not read, but she had heard it read aloud, and in it was written 'If a man is a poet, he can make soup out of a sausage skewer'. She asked me if I were a poet. I felt guiltless in that respect, and she said I must begone and set myself to become one. I asked again what might be needed, because it was quite as difficult for me to find that out as it was to prepare the soup. My grandmother had heard a great deal read, and she said that the three chief things needed were 'understanding, imagination, and feeling'. 'If you can manage to obtain these three for thyself, thou wilt be a poet, and then it will be an easy matter about the sausage skewer and the soup'."

"I went downstairs and stepped forth into the wide world toward the west, that I might become a poet."

"Understanding is in every case the most important thing. That I knew, the other two parts do not receive much attention. I went, accordingly, first in search of understanding. Where, indeed, does it dwell? Go to the ant and learn wisdom, said a great king of the Jews. That I had learned in the library, and I did not stop till I reached the first great anthill. There I lay in wait to become wise."

"The ants are a very respectable little people. They are pure intellect. Everything with them is like a correct sum in Division which leaves no remainder. To work and to lay eggs, say they, means to live in the present time and to provide for posterity, so that is what they do. They are

might be, she laid her staff on the breast of the King, and in very deed the loveliest nosegay of violets sprang up, and its scent was so strong that the King commanded the mice who stood nearest the chimney to stick their tails in the fire at once, so that they might have a smell of burning, for the smell of the violets was overpowering, and was not, besides, the kind of scent they liked.

"But what was the 'more' of which you spoke?" asked the King.

"Yes," said the little mouse, "that, I think, is what is called the effect!" And thereupon she turned the sausage skewer round, and, behold! not a single flower was to be seen on it. She held only the bare stick, and that she raised like a conductor's baton.

"'Violets,' said the Elf to me, 'are for the sight, the smell, and the touch, after that you have still to take thought for hearing and taste.'" Then the little mouse beat time. That was music, not such music as rang out in the forest at the Elves' fête, but such as may be heard in the kitchen. What a boiling and roasting! It came suddenly, as if the wind roared through all the dishes, as if kettles and pots boiled over. The shovel clattered on the brass kettle, and then—suddenly all was still. The soft, muffled singing of the tea-kettle was heard, and it was queer to listen to it, for one could not rightly make out if the kettle were beginning to boil or ceasing. The little pot bubbled and the big pot bubbled—neither cared a bit for the other, it seemed as if there was no sense in the pot. And the little mouse waved her baton ever more wildly—the pots foamed, threw up great bubbles and boiled over, the wind roared and whistled in the chimney—huha! it was so terrible, that the little mouse herself let her stick fall.

"That was a strong soup!" said the King of the Mice. "Is it not soon to be served up?"

"That was the whole thing!" replied the little mouse, and made her curtsy.

"The whole thing! Now then, we should like to hear what the next has to report!" said the King.

spreading crown. It was very old too. I knew that a living being dwelt here, a woman called a Dryad, who is born with the tree and dies with it. I had heard this in the library. Now I saw such a tree, and such an Oak-maiden. She gave a frightful scream when she saw me near her. All women are afraid of mice, and she had more reason to fear than any of the others, for I could have gnawed through the tree on which her life depended. I spoke to the maiden kindly and frankly, and begged her not to be afraid. At last she took me in her soft hand. And when I told her why I had gone out into the wide world, she promised me that perhaps that very evening I should have one of the two treasures which I still sought. She told me that Phantasus was her very dear friend, that he was as beautiful as the God of Love, and that he lay for many an hour under the leafy branches of the tree which rustled then more loudly over them both. He called her his Dryad, she said, the tree his tree. The beautiful knarled oak was exactly to his taste—the root spread deep and firm in the earth, the trunk and the crown towered high in the fresh air, and knew the driving snow, the sharp winds, and the warm sunshine as they ought to be known. ‘Yes,’ the Dryad went on to say, ‘the birds sing up there in the top of the tree and tell of foreign climes which they have visited, and on the only dead bough the stork has built his nest, that is an ornament, and gives us a chance of hearing a little about the land of the Pyramids. All that pleases Phantasus, but it does not satisfy him, and I myself have to tell him about the forest life, and hark back to my childhood, when I was little and the tree was slender, so slender that a stinging nettle overshadowed it, and I must relate everything up till now, when the tree has grown tall and strong. Just sit down there under the green forest king and watch carefully. When Phantasus comes I shall find an opportunity to pinch his wing and pluck out a little quill. Take the quill—a better was never given to poet—then thou hast enough.’

Phantasus came, the quill was plucked out, and “I seized it,” said the little mouse. “I put it in water and kept it there till it was softened, it was still very hard to digest, but finally I chewed it up. It is not very easy to nibble on till

divided into high class and the low class, rank is shown by a number, the Queen of the Ants is number ONE, and her opinion is the only right one on everything. She seems to have all the wisdom of the whole world, and it was that of which it was of importance for me to know. She talked so much and so learnedly that it seemed to me quite foolish. She said her anthill was the highest thing in the world, but close beside the heap, nevertheless, there stood a tree which was higher, much higher—that could not be denied—so it was never mentioned. One evening an ant had lost her way on the tree and crawled up the trunk, not even to the top, but higher than any ant had reached before, and when she turned back and came home again, she told about something which she had found outside much higher than the anthill. But all the ants thought this was an insult to the community, and the ant was sentenced therefore to be muzzled and to live in perpetual solitude. Shortly afterwards another ant came upon the tree, and made the same journey and the same discovery. She spoke of it prudently and vaguely, they said, and as she was, besides, a highly esteemed ant, they believed her, and when she died they set up an egg shell as a monument to her, for they had a great respect for the sciences. I saw,” said the little mouse, “that the ants were always running about with their eggs on their backs. One of them dropped her egg once, and tried very hard to lift it up again, but she did not succeed. Then two others came by, who helped her with might and main, so that they nearly lost their own eggs, then, however, they instantly withdrew their help, for ‘charity begins at home’, and the Queen said that both sympathy and understanding had been shown by the two ants in this. ‘These two qualities’, said the Queen, ‘set us ants high above all other rational beings. Wisdom, at all events, must be seen in us in the clearest way, and I have the greatest wisdom!’ And with that she stood up on her hind legs. No one could mistake her. I could not be wrong, I gobbled her up. Go to the ants to learn wisdom now I had the Queen.

“Then I betook myself towards the great tree mentioned above. It was an oak with a tall trunk and a thick wide-

She had travelled on the railway with the goods train. She had watched for a chance to do this, and yet she had arrived almost too late. She pressed forward, looking quite dishevelled. She had lost her sausage skewer, but not her speech. She began to speak at once, as if they were only waiting for her, cared only to listen to her, as if nothing else in the world mattered. She spoke hurriedly, she said what she had got to say. Nobody there had thought of seeing her, and nobody had time to find fault with her or her speech while she held forth. Let us hear what she said.

IV

WHAT THE FOURTH MOUSE HAD TO TELL BEFORE THE THIRD ONE HAD SPOKEN

"I betook myself at once to the largest town," said she, "but the name of it has escaped me. I have a bad memory for names. From the railway station I went to the Town Hall with some goods that had been seized by the authorities, and having arrived there, I ran into the turnkey's house. The turnkey was speaking of his prisoners, particularly of one who had uttered ill-considered words. About those words other words were spoken again and again, and these again were written down and registered. 'The whole affair is like making soup from sausage skewers,' said the jailer, 'but the soup may cost him his head!' That filled me with interest in the prisoner," said the little mouse. "I made use of my chance when it came, and slipped in beside him. Behind every locked door there is a mouse hole. The prisoner looked pale, he had a long beard and great, sparkling eyes. The lamp flickered and smoked, but the walls were so black that it did not make them seem any blacker. The prisoner scratched pictures and verses with white chalk on the black walls. I did not read them. I think time hung heavy on his hands. I was a welcome guest. He drew me to him with bread crumbs, with whistling, and with gentle words. He was amused with me. I gradually gained confidence in him, and we became friends. He shared his bread and water with me, gave me cheese and

one is a poet, there is a great deal that one must have inside one. Now, I had the two, understanding and imagination, and by them I knew that the third was to be found in the library, for a great man has said and written that there are novels which are written simply and solely to relieve men of their superfluity of tears, accordingly they are a kind of sponge to soak up the feelings and emotions. I recalled a few of these books that had always looked particularly inviting. They were so much read and so greasy, they must have absorbed an entire ocean of tears.

"I returned to the library and ate up a whole novel—that is, the soft part, the true novel, the crust, on the contrary, the binding, I did not touch. When I had digested it, and yet another, I perceived already how emotion stired within me. I ate a little bit of a third novel, and then I was a poet. I said so myself, and others said it too. I had headache and stomach-ache, I don't know how many kinds of aches I had. Next I thought over all the stories that could be brought into connection with a sausage skewer, and no end of skewers and sticks and staves and chips of wood came into my head. The Queen of the Ants must have had a wonderful understanding. I remembered the man who took a white wand in his mouth, by means of which he could make himself as well as the wand invisible. I thought of hobby horses, of staff rhymes or alliteration, of 'breaking a stick across anyone', and God knows how many such phrases about staves, sticks, and sausage skewers. All my thoughts blossomed into skewers, chips, and staves, and out of these one can make poetry if one is a poet, as I am. I have worked dreadfully hard, so that I have at last become a poet. I shall therefore be able every day of the week to wait upon you to serve you up a poetical story about a skewer. Yes, that is my soup!"

"In that case let us hear what the third mouse has to say," said the King of the Mice.

"Peep! peep!" was heard at the kitchen door, and a little mouse—it was the fourth one of the mice who were trying for the prize, she whom the others thought already dead—darted in like an arrow. She ran round and round the stick with the crape on it. She had been running day and night

I might remain under her protection, no animal should be allowed to harm me, she would see to that herself in winter, if the fare was poor

"She was in everything a knowing woman. She showed me that the warder could only hoot with the horn that hung loose at his side. 'He is so frightfully proud about it, that he thinks he is an owl in the tower. He pretends to be great, but he is quite mean. Soup from a sausage skewer.' I begged the owl to give me the recipe for the soup, and then she explained it to me. 'Soup from a sausage skewer,' said she, 'is only a human phrase, and may be understood in different ways. Each man thinks his way is the most correct, but the whole thing is, properly speaking, nothing.'

"'Nothing!' I exclaimed. That struck me. The Truth is not always pleasant, but Truth is above everything else, and the old owl said that too. Then I thought over the matter, and I saw quite clearly that, if I brought that which is far above everything else, I should bring far more than soup from a sausage skewer. And thereupon I hurried off so that I might reach home in time, and bring the highest and the best, that which surpasses all else—the Truth. The mice are an enlightened people, and the King is greater than all of them together. He is capable therefore of making me queen—for the Truth's sake!"

"Thy truth is a lie!" said the mouse who had not yet had a chance to speak, "I can prepare the soup, and I will do it too."

V

HOW IT WAS PREPARED

"I did not go abroad," said the third mouse. "I stayed in my own country, that is the right thing to do. There is no use travelling when one can get everything just as well here. I stayed. I have not learnt my plan from supernatural beings, I have not eaten it up, nor conversed with owls at all. I worked my plan out of my very own thoughts. Will you be so kind as to set the kettle on the fire? Thanks. Now pour in water quite full, up to the brim. That's right. Now put

sausage, and I lived quite luxuriously. Still I must say it was chiefly the good company that kept me there. He let me run on his hand, on his arm, right up his sleeve, he let me creep about in his beard, and he called me his little friend. I became truly fond of him. Such a feeling is reciprocal. I forgot what I was seeking in the wide world. I forgot my sausage skewer, which I had laid in a crack in the floor. There it lies still. I wanted to stay where I was. If I went away first the poor prisoner would have nobody at all, and that is a state of things hardly to be borne in this world. I stayed, he did not. He talked very sadly to me the last time, gave me twice as much bread and cheese as usual, and kissed his hand to me. He went out and did not return. I do not know his history. 'Soup from a sausage skewer,' said the jailer and I went in to him, yet I should not have trusted him. He took me indeed on his hand, but he put me in a cage, into a treadmill. That is horrible! One runs and runs and never gets any farther, and is only a laughing-stock.

"The granddaughter of the jailer was a little darling, with a curly head like the finest gold, and such merry eyes, such a smiling mouth. 'Poor little mouse,' said she, as she peeped into my hideous cage. Then she drew down the iron bar, and I sprang down on the window sill, thence out upon the gutter. Free! Free! I thought only of that, not of the object of my journey.

"It grew dark, and as night came on I took up my abode in an old tower, where a watchman and an owl lived. I trusted neither of them, least of all the owl. She is like a cat, and has the great fault that she eats mice, but one may make a mistake, and that was what I did. She was a respectable, extremely well-bred old owl. She knew more than the watchman, and just as much as I did. The owl children made a great fuss about everything. 'Just don't you make soup from a sausage skewer,' said the old lady. These were the hardest words she could find it in her heart to say, she had such a tender love for her own children. Her way of doing things gave me such confidence, that I called 'peep' to her out of the cranny where I sat. This confidence pleased her very much, and she assured me that

UNDER THE WILLOW TREE

THE country round the little Zealand town of Kjoge is very bleak, to be sure, the town lies on the seashore, which is always beautiful, but, there! it might be more beautiful than it is. All round it there are flat fields, and it is a long way to the forest. But still when one's home is in a place, one generally finds some beauty in it, something which afterwards one longs for even in the most charming spot in the world. And it must certainly be admitted that it could be quite pleasant in summer, on the very outskirts of the little town, where some poor little gardens lie on the banks of the stream, which here falls into the sea. So especially thought the two neighbours' children who played here, and wriggled themselves through the gooseberry bushes in order to reach one another. In the one garden there was an elder tree, in the other a willow tree, and the children were very fond of playing under the latter. They had been told they could do so, although the willow tree was quite close to the stream, and they might very easily have fallen into the water, but the eye of God rests ever on the little ones, else it would be a poor lookout indeed for them. But they were really very careful with regard to the water. The boy stood in such dread of it, that he could not be got to enter the sea in summer, when the other children enjoyed splashing about in it, and he had to bear patiently the teasing and the fun the others made of him on this account. Once Johanna, the neighbour's little daughter, had a dream. She was sailing in a skiff, and Kanut waded out to her, so that the water first came up to his neck, then rose over his head, and at last he disappeared. From the moment little Kanut heard this dream he no longer had to bear being laughed at by the other boys, for he now went boldly into the water. Had not Johanna dreamt it? He never did go into the water by himself; but that dream was henceforth his pride.

more coal on. Keep it always burning, so that the water boils, it must boil over and over—so! Now throw the sausage skewer in. Now, may it please His Majesty to dip his tail into the boiling water, and stir it round with the said tail. The longer the King stirs it the stronger the soup becomes, it costs nothing. No ingredients are required—only to stir it.”

“Can somebody else not do it?” asked the King.

“No,” said the mouse, “only the King’s tail has the power.”

And the water boiled and bubbled, and the King of the Mice placed himself close beside the kettle. It was almost a risky thing to do. He stuck out his tail, as the mice do in the dairy, when they cream a bowl of milk, and afterwards lick the cream off their tails, but he only put his tail into the hot steam, then he sprang down at once from the hearth.

“That is quite clear, of course, thou art my queen,” cried he. “We shall let the soup stand over till our golden wedding, then the poor of my kingdom who are to have a feast then will have something at the thought of which they can rejoice, and their rejoicing will last long.”

Then they were married, but several of the mice said, as they went home, “That cannot properly be called soup from a sausage skewer, it is rather soup from a mouse’s tail.” One and another thought it was rather a good story. The whole thing, however, might have been turned otherwise. “Now, I would have told it thus, and thus, and thus——”

These were the critics who are always so clever in showing how things should have been otherwise.

This story went forth over all the World. Opinions differed about it, but the story itself remained as it was. That is the right way, in great things as well as small, even in regard to soup made of a sausage skewer, only one need not expect thanks for it.

always the way with men. He dreamt he was a real street boy, that he had four pennies, and that he bought the maiden, and ate her up."

"And so they lay for days and weeks on the counter till they grew dry, and the thoughts of the maiden became ever more tender and womanly. 'I am so glad that I have lain along with him on the same table,' she thought, and, crack! she broke in two."

"'Had she only known my love,' thought he, 'she might have held out longer!'"

"That is the story, and here they are, both of them," said the man who sold cakes. "They are remarkable for their station in life and on account of their silent love, which never came to anything. There, you can have them!" and he gave Johanna the man, which was whole, and Kanut received the broken maiden, but the children were so moved by the story that they had not the heart to eat the lovers."

Next day they went with them to the churchyard, and sat down under the wall, which is covered, summer and winter, with thick ivy, like a rich carpet. Here they put the gingerbread figures among the green tendrils in the sunshine, and told a band of other children the story of the silent love that came to nothing. This is rightly called "love", they said, for the story is lovely. They were all agreed about that, but when the two children cast a glance once more at the honey-cake couple, would you believe it? they found that a great boy, out of sheer spite, had eaten up the broken maiden. The children cried over it, and then—this probably was done in order that the poor lover should not be left alone in the world—after that, they ate him up too, but they never forgot the story."

The children were always together among the gooseberry bushes and under the willow tree, and the little maid sang the most beautiful songs in a voice as clear as a bell. Kanut, on the other hand, had no music in him, but he knew the words, and that is always something. The people in Kjøge, even the wife of the man who kept the fancy-goods shop, stopped to listen when Johanna sang. "She has a very sweet voice, the little one," she used to say.

Their poor parents were often together, and Kanut and Johanna played in the garden, and on the highroad, which was bordered along the ditch by a row of willow trees. These trees with their tops cut off did not look very pretty, but still, they did not stand there for ornament, but for use. The old willow tree in the garden was prettier, and the two children used to sit under it. In the town there was a large marketplace, and at the time of the yearly fair there were whole streets there of tents and booths, with silk ribbons, and boots, and everything you could wish. It was a great crowd, and, as a rule, the weather was rainy, and then one noticed the damp smell of the peasants' frieze jackets. But there was also the lovely flavour of the honey or gingerbread cakes, of which there was a booth full, and, what was far the best of all, the man who sold the cakes always lodged during the fair time with little Kanut's parents, and from time to time he gave Kanut a small gingerbread cake, of which, of course, little Johanna had her share. But what was still finer was that the gingerbread seller could tell stories about all sorts of things, even about his gingerbread cakes. Indeed, one evening he told a story about them which made so deep an impression on the children, that they never forgot it, and so it is as well we should tell it to you also, especially as it is quite short.

"On the shop counter," he told them, "lay two gingerbread cakes, one in the form of a man with a hat, the other in the shape of a maiden without a hat. They had their faces turned upwards, and had to be looked at on the front, not on the back, for on that side you ought never to consider a person. The man had a bitter almond on his left side, this was his heart. The maiden, on the other hand, was honey cake all over. They both lay as samples on the counter, and lay there a long time, till at last they fell in love, but neither told the other, and that had to be done, if anything was to come out of it.

"'He is a man, he must say the first word,' thought she, but she would have been quite content if she had only known that her love was returned.

"His thoughts were far too foolish and grand, but that is

not going to play the silent lover, as the gingerbread cakes had both done. Their story was a good lesson to him.

Now he was a journeyman. His knapsack was packed, and at last, for the first time in his life, he was going to Copenhagen, where a master was ready for him. How surprised and delighted Johanna would be! She was now seventeen years old, and he was nineteen.

He would have bought a gold ring for her in Kjøge, but he bethought himself that he would be sure to get a much finer one in Copenhagen. So he took leave of his parents, and on a rainy day in late autumn he left his native town. The leaves were falling from the trees, and he was wet through when he came to the capital and to his new master's house. Next Sunday he meant to visit Johanna's father. The new journeyman's clothes were brought out, and the new hat, bought in Kjøge, was put on. It made him look very nice, before this he had always worn a cap. He found the house he was seeking, and climbed up so many steps, it was enough to make one giddy, the way people in the big town were piled on the top of each other.

In the room everything looked very comfortable, and Johanna's father received him very kindly. He was a stranger to the wife, but she shook hands with him and offered him some coffee.

"Johanna will be very glad to see you," said her father, "you have become quite a fine young man! Now you must see her. Yes, she is a daughter who is a joy to me, and, if God wills, will be a still greater joy. She has her own room, and pays us for it."

And the father knocked politely at the door, as if he were a stranger, and then they went in. But oh, how pretty everything was there! Such a room was surely never seen in Kjøge! The queen herself could not have a more charming room! There were rugs, and window curtains which came right down to the floor, and a velvet chair, and all round were flowers and pictures. There was also a mirror which one ran the risk of walking into, for it was as big as a door.

Kanut saw all this at a glance, and yet, none the less, he saw only Johanna. She was quite grown up and not at all

These were glorious days, but they would not last for ever. The neighbours were parted. The mother of the little girl died, and her father intended to marry again, and go to the capital, where he had been promised a post as messenger. In this post he would be much better paid and have a better position. The neighbours parted with tears, and the children wept, but their parents promised that they should write to one another at least once a year.

Kanut was apprenticed to a shoemaker, for they could not allow the big boy to run wild any longer. And he was now also confirmed.

Oh, how gladly would he have been with little Johanna in Copenhagen on that solemn day. But he remained in Kjøge. He had never been to Copenhagen, though the capital is only five miles from the little town. But away across the bay on a clear day Kanut had seen the towers, and on his confirmation day he saw quite distinctly the golden cross on the Frauenkirche glittering in the sun.

Oh, how often his thoughts were with Johanna! But did Johanna think of him? Yes! About Christmas-time there came a letter from her father to Kanut's parents. In the letter he told them that they were getting on very well in Copenhagen, and that Johanna especially had had a piece of good fortune on account of her fine voice. She had an engagement in a play in which she was to sing, and she had already earned some money by singing, and out of this she was sending the dear neighbours in Kjøge a whole thaler to make merry with on Christmas Eve. They were to drink to her health. She had added this herself in a postscript, and in the same there was further, "Kind regards to Kanut."

The whole family wept, and yet they were all delighted, they cried for joy. Every day Kanut's thoughts had been full of Johanna, and now he saw that she had been thinking of him too, and the nearer the time came for the end of his apprenticeship, the more clearly he saw that he loved Johanna, and that she must be his wife. At the thought a smile came to his lips, and once he drew the thread so quickly, and pressed his foot against the knee-strap so strongly, that the awl ran deep into his finger, but that was nothing. He was certainly

master's wife did not approve of him always walking in the evening, and she shook her head, but his master laughed "He is only a young fellow," said he

"On Sunday," thought Kanut, "we shall see each other, and I will say to her how near she is to my heart and soul, and what she must be my little wife I am only a poor journeyman shoemaker, but I may become a master, and I will work and strive hard, indeed, I will tell her 'Nothing comes of a silent love I learnt that from the gingerbread cakes!'"

Sunday came, and Kanut came, but how unluckily, they were all invited out for the evening, they had to tell him Johanna pressed his hand and asked

"Have you been to the theatre? You must go some day I sing on Wednesday, and if you have time that day I will send you a ticket My father knows where your master lives"

How sweet it was of her! And on Wednesday morning he received a sealed paper without a word, but the ticket was inside In the evening Kanut went for the first time in his life to the theatre And what did he see there? He saw Johanna! How beautiful and graceful she was! Certainly she was married to a strange person, but that was all in the play, something she was acting Kanut knew this, else she would not have had the heart to send him the ticket to see it, and all the people clapped their hands and cried out, and Kanut cried "Hurrah!"

The King himself smiled at Johanna as if he were pleased with her Oh, how small Kanut felt himself! But he loved her from the depth of his heart, and she was fond of him too, but the man must say the first word, the gingerbread maiden had thought so too There was a great deal in that story

As soon as Sunday came he went back again, he felt just as if he were about to set his foot on holy ground Johanna was alone, and received him, so nothing could have happened more luckily

"It is a good thing you came," she said "I had already thought of asking my father to send for you, but I had a feeling you would come this evening I must tell you that I am going on Friday to France I am obliged to do it in order to get on"

like what Kanut had thought she would be, but much prettier. In all Kjøge there was not a single maiden like her. She was so dainty, and she looked at Kanut so very strangely, but only for a moment, then she ran to him as if she were going to kiss him. She did not quite do that, but she was very near doing it, indeed, she was truly glad at the sight of the friend of her childhood. The tears stood in her eyes, and then she had even so much to ask and to tell about every thing, from Kanut's parents to the elder and the willow trees. These she called elder mother and willow father, as if they were people. And, indeed they might as well pass for such as the gingerbread cakes had passed. She spoke of the cakes too, and of their silent love—how they lay on the counter and broke in two—and then they both laughed heartily, but the blood flamed in Kanut's cheeks, and his heart beat quicker than usual. No, she had not become proud! It was she too—for he noticed it—who made her parents ask him to remain there the whole evening, and she poured out the tea, and handed the cup to him herself. Afterwards she took a book and read aloud, and it seemed to Kanut as if what she read treated of his love, so exactly did it fall in with his thoughts. Then she sang a simple song, but when she sang it became quite a story, it seemed as if she poured her own heart into it. Yes, she was certainly fond of Kanut. The tears rolled down his cheek, he could not help it, and he could not say a single word, he felt himself quite dazed, and then she pressed his hand and said

“You have a good heart, Kanut, don't part with it.”

That was an evening without compare. To sleep after it was impossible, and Kanut had no sleep.

As he left, Johanna's father had said, “Now, you will not quite forget us, you will not let the whole winter pass before you visit us again?” So he could well go back again the following Sunday, and so he made up his mind to do. But every evening after work, and they worked by daylight, Kanut went into the town. He went through the street in which Johanna lived, and looked up at her windows. They were almost always lighted up, and one evening he saw clearly the shadow of her head on the curtain, that was a fine evening. His

Kanut felt as if the room was going round and round with him, and as if his heart would break. Certainly no tears came to his eyes, but it was quite easily seen how deeply he felt her going.

"You faithful, true soul!" she said, and thereupon Kanut's tongue was loosened, and he told her how deeply he loved her, and that she must be his little wife. While he said this he saw Johanna change colour and grow white. She let go his hand, and answered seriously and gravely.

"Do not make yourself and me unhappy. I will always be a good sister to you, in whom you can trust, but nothing more!" and she stroked his hot forehead with her soft hand. "God gives us strength for much, if only we have the will for it."

At that moment her stepmother came into the room.

"Kanut is quite wild because I am going away," said Johanna. "Be a man!" she said, laying her hand on his shoulder. It looked as if they had been speaking of the journey and of nothing else. "You are just a child," she continued, "but now you must be good and reasonable, as if we were still children under the willow tree."

But to Kanut it was as if the world had gone to pieces. His thoughts were like loose threads fluttering hither and thither. He stayed, though he did not know whether they had bidden him to do so or not. But they were friendly and kind, and Johanna poured out tea and sang. There was not the old ring in her song, and yet it was wonderfully beautiful. It was heartbreaking. Then they parted. Kanut did not hold out his hand to her, but she took his and said "You must give your sister your hand to say farewell, my old playfellow!" She smiled through the tears which rolled down her cheeks, and she repeated the word "Brother." Yes, that was a great consolation. And this was the parting.

She sailed to France, and Kanut strolled about the streets of Copenhagen. His companions in the workshop asked him why he wandered about so moodily, and told him he ought to have some amusement with them, for he was still a young fellow.

They went together to the dancing-room. Here there were

gingerbread cakes. Now he understood why the man had a bitter almond on his left side, for he himself had a bitter taste from it, and as to Johanna, who was always so gentle and kind, she was pure honey cake. He felt as if the strap of his knapsack hurt him, so that he could not breathe. He loosened it, but that did no good. He saw only a half world outside him, the other half he carried with him, within his own heart. This is how things were with him.

But when he saw the high mountains, the world became wider to him, and his thoughts shifted outwards. Tears came to his eyes.

The Alps looked to him like the folded wings of the earth. How would it be if they were unfolded? How would the great pinions look outspread with their motley pictures of dark woods, rushing waters, clouds, and snow masses? On the Last Day the earth lifts these great wings, mounts to heaven, and vanishes like a bubble in the glory of God. "Oh, if it were only the Last Day!" he sighed.

Silently he went through the land, which seemed to him like a grassy orchard. From the wooden balconies of the houses maidens at their lacework nodded to him. The mountain peaks glowed in the red evening sun, and when he saw the green lakes among the dark trees, he thought of the coast of the Kjøge Gulf, and a melancholy that was not pain filled his breast.

There, where the Rhine rolls like a long foaming wave, and is transformed into pure, snow-white masses of cloud, as if there indeed were the birthplace of the clouds, and where the rainbow shimmers over them like a loose ribbon, there, he thought of the water-mill at Kjøge, where the waters rushed foaming. Gladly would he have stayed there, in the quiet town by the Rhine, but there were far too many elders and willow trees, so he went on farther, over great high mountains, among yawning precipices, and over roads hung like swallows' nests on to the cliff. The waters roared in the depths below, the clouds lay beneath him, he strode on over thistles and alpenroses, and over the snow in the warm sunshine, and said farewell to the land of the north. He walked under chestnut trees in bloom, and through vineyards and

The sun shone in through the painted panes between the high, slender pillars, reverence filled his thoughts, and gentle peace lay on his spirit

He searched for and found a good master in Nuremberg, and settled with him and began to learn the German language

The old moat round the city has been turned into little latches gardens, but the high walls still stand with their heavy towers. The ropemaker twists his rope on the walk built of beams along the inner side of the city wall. And here, all round, the elder grows out of clefts and fissures, and stretches its branches over the poor little houses lying below. In one of these the master lived with whom Kanut worked. And over the little skylight window at which Kanut sat, the elder tree hung its branches.

Here he lived a summer and a winter, but when the spring came, he could not bear it any longer. The elder tree bloomed and smelt so home-like, that he felt as if he were in the garden at Kjøge. Then he left his master and went to another farther in the town, where no elders grew.

His workshop was in the neighbourhood of an old stone bridge, by an ever noisy little water-mill. Outside flowed only the rapid stream, shut in by houses that were all alike hung with old, moth-eaten projections, and looked as if they would all topple over into the water. Here no elder trees grew. There was not even a flower-pot with a little green, but right opposite the workshop a great, old willow tree had its roots. It seemed as if it held fast to the house in order not to be torn away by the stream. It stretched its branches out over the river, as the willow tree had hung over the stream in the garden at Kjøge.

Yes, he had certainly gone from elder mother to willow father. The tree here, especially when the moon shone, had something which went to his heart. It was certainly not the moonshine, but the old tree itself.

However, he could not bear it. And why? Ask the willow tree, ask the blossoming elder. So he bade his master in Nuremberg farewell and went on farther.

He spoke to no one of Johanna, but hid his sorrow in his heart; and he saw a deep meaning in the tale of the two

drowned everything His master nodded his head "Yes, yes, her name is Johanna," and then he pulled out a printed paper and showed Kanut her name—her name was there in full

No, it was no dream All the people cheered, and threw her flowers and wreaths, and every time she withdrew they recalled her. She went and came again and again

On the street the people crowded round her carriage and drew it themselves without horses Kanut was in the first row, and cheered as lustily as any, and when the carriage stopped in front of her brilliantly lighted house, Kanut was standing at the carriage door It opened, and she stepped out The light fell on her dear face, and she smiled and thanked them gently and kindly, and seemed deeply affected Kanut looked her full in the face, and she looked straight at him, but she did not know him A man with a glittering star on his breast gave her his arm They were betrothed, some one said

Then Kanut went home and strapped up his knapsack. He would, he must go back to his home, to the elder and the willow tree—ah, under the willow tree! In an hour one can live a whole lifetime

The old couple begged him to stay on Their words were useless In vain they reminded him of the winter, and told him that snow had already fallen in the mountains With his knapsack on his back, and leaning on his stick, he thought that he could follow in the track of the slow-moving coach, for which a way must be cleared

He set out for the mountains, walking always up, up, till exhausted, he still saw no village, no house, he went on to the north The stars shone over him, his feet stumbled, and his head was giddy Far down in the valley stars were shining also, it seemed as if there was a sky beneath him too He felt sick, the stars down there grew in number perpetually, and shone ever more brightly as they moved to and fro It was a little village in which the lights were twinkling, and as soon as he understood this, he made a last effort, and reached a poor shelter

He remained there for that night and the following day,

fields of maize The mountains were a high wall between him and all his memories, and so it had to be.

In front of him lay a great and splendid city, they called it Milan Here he found a German master, who gave him work It was a worthy old couple in whose workshop he worked The two old people became fond of the quiet workman, who spoke little but worked the more, and lived a godly and Christ-like life It seemed to himself, too, as if God had lifted the heavy burden from his heart

His greatest pleasure was now and then to climb the great marble church, which seemed to him as if created from the snow of his home, and formed into statues, tapering pinnacles, and open porticos adorned with colour From every angle, every point, every arch, white statues smiled upon him Over him he had the blue sky, beneath him the town and the far-stretching green plains of Lombardy, and to the north the high mountains with their everlasting snows Then he thought of the church at Kjöge with its red, ivy-clad walls, but he did not long to be there Here, behind the mountains, he wished to be buried

He had lived there for a year, and three years had passed since he left his home Then one day his master took him into the town, not to the circus to see the riders, but to the great opera house The hall there was well worth looking at Beautiful silken curtains hung down at all the seven rows of boxes, and from the floor up to the dizzy height sat most elegant ladies with bouquets of flowers in their hands, as if they were going to a ball The gentlemen were in full dress, and many of them wore gold and silver orders It was as light as the brightest sunshine, and the music rang out It was much finer than the playhouse in Copenhagen, but then Johanna was there She was here too Yes, it was like a spell The curtain was raised, and there stood Johanna, dressed in silk and gold, with a golden crown on her head She sang, as only an angel of God can sing, she came forward just as she used to walk, and smiled as only Johanna could smile She looked straight down at Kanut. Poor Kanut seized his master's hand, crying out loudly, "Johanna!"—but no one else heard him, for the music

looking highly superior on the right side, for there, there was no fault to be found with them. They walked straight on to the church, and Kanut and Johanna followed also hand in hand, and there stood the old church as of old, with its red walls covered with green ivy. The great door of the church flew open, the organ sounded, and they walked up the broad aisle of the church. "Our superiors first," said the gingerbread bridal pair, making room for Kanut and Johanna, who knelt at the altar. She bowed her head over his face, and icy-cold tears fell from her eyes. It was the ice round her heart melting—through his great love. The tears fell on his burning cheeks, and—he awoke. He was sitting under the old willow tree in a foreign land on a cold winter's evening, icy hail fell from the clouds and pelted his face.

"That was the most blissful hour of my life," said he, "and it was—a dream. Oh God, let me dream again!" He closed his eyes again, he slept, and dreamed.

Towards morning snow fell. The wind drifted it over him, still he slept. Villagers passed to church. On the roadside sat a workman. He was dead, frozen—under the willow tree!

for his body needed rest and care. A thaw had come, and it was raining in the valley. But early the next morning a man came with a barrel organ and played one of the melodies from Kanut's home. Kanut could not bear to wait longer, and went on farther towards the north. He travelled for days, many days, in haste, as if he were anxious to reach home before all there should have died. But he spoke to no one of his longing. No one would have believed in this sorrow of his heart, the deepest man can feel. Such grief is not for the world. It is not interesting even to one's friends. A stranger, he journeyed through strange lands home to the north.

It was evening. He was walking on the open highroad, the frost was beginning to make itself felt, the country was growing more level, there were more fields and meadows. At the roadside stood a big willow tree. It all looked so home-like, that he sat down beneath the tree. He felt very tired, his head fell forward, and his eyes closed in slumber. Yet he still seemed conscious that the willow tree was stretching its branches down over him, the tree seemed to him to be a strong old man. It was the willow father himself who lifted him in his arms, his tired son, and carried him back to his fatherland, to the garden of his childhood on the open, bleak shore at Kjøge. Yes, it was the willow tree himself from Kjøge who had travelled out into the world to seek him. Now he had found him, and taken him back to the little garden by the stream, and here was Johanna, in her splendour, with the golden crown on her head, as he had last seen her, and she called out to him, "Welcome!"

In front of him were standing two curious figures, which, looked much more like human beings than they had looked in his childhood. They too had changed. It was the two gingerbread cakes—the man and the woman, they turned their right side to him and looked then best.

"We thank you," they said to Kanut, "you have loosened our tongues, so that we can freely express our thoughts, but for that we could not have said a word, and now the result is—that we are engaged."

Then they went hand in hand through the streets of Kjøge,

houses for sale, models of their own mountain homes, and the children are all clever at making a bargain. In rain and in sunshine they are here with their wares.

About twenty years ago a little boy often stood here ready to sell like the rest his curious wares, but always a little way off from the others. He had an earnest face, and held his tray with the carved wares tightly in both hands, as if unwilling really to part with them, but he was so serious, and was, too, such a little fellow, that strangers were struck by his looks, and often called to him; so he often sold his wares more readily than the other children, without himself knowing the reason.

His grandfather lived an hour's walk farther up the mountain. It was he who carved the pretty little houses. Close to the old man in the room stood a big cupboard full of the same carved things,—nut-crackers, knives and forks, boxes carved with foliage and leaping chamois. It was a treasure house of delight to childish eyes. But the boy Rudy looked with far greater delight and longing at some old firearms which hung on the ceiling under the rafters. His grandfather had promised him he should have them later on, but he must first grow big and strong so as to be able to handle them. Though he was still a little boy he had to look after the goats, and there was never a better herdsman than Rudy. He could climb higher even than the goats, for he loved seeking for birds' nests high up in the trees. He was bold and daring, but you never saw him smile except when he stood by the roaring waterfall, or heard the rush of the avalanche.

He never played with the other children, and was only seen with them when his grandfather sent him down from the mountain to sell his wares, and this was little to Rudy's mind. He liked better to clamber about alone on the mountains, or to sit by his grandfather and listen to his tales of the olden time and of the people in his birthplace, Meiringen, near by. The people there, said the old man, would not in early times have been met with in that district. They were settlers there, and they had come wandering from far northern Sweden, their forefathers' home. Rudy was proud of knowing this, but he learned more from other nice acquaintances, especially from

THE ICE MAIDEN

I. LITTLE RUDY

LET us go to Switzerland, and wander through that glorious mountain land where the woods grow to the very foot of the steep cliffs. Let us climb up to the dazzling snowfields and go down again to the green meadows, where rivers and streams roll swiftly, as if in haste to reach the sea and vanish. The sun blazes down on the deep valleys, and far above on the great tracts of snow its heat is fierce, so that year by year they melt away into glittering ice pinnacles, and are transformed into sweeping avalanches and turreted glaciers. Two such glaciers lie in the broad hollow of the rocks under the Schreckhorn and Wetterhorn, near the little mountain town of Grindelwald. They are a marvellous sight, and in the summertime strangers from all parts of the world come hither to see them. They come over the high snow-covered mountains, or they toil up from the deep valleys. When they do this, they have to climb for many hours, and whilst they climb the valley seems to sink ever deeper and deeper, till they look down into it as though from a balloon. Above them the clouds often hang like a thick heavy veil about the mountain tops, whilst below in the valley where the many brown wooden houses lie scattered the sun is still shining, and a ray lights up a patch of radiant green as if it were transparent. Down below the water roars and rumbles, up above it tickles and ripples, and the streams look like silver ribbons fluttering over the rocks.

On both sides of the way to the mountains stand wooden houses, each with its own small potato patch, for there are many hungry little mouths within the cottages. From all sides the children rush out and crowd round the travellers whether they come in carriages or on foot. The whole troop of children does business here, offering pretty little carved

draw near him, and the swallows from his grandfather's house, where they had no less than seven nests, flew up to him and the goats and sang, "We and you! You and we!" They brought greetings from home and grandfather, and even from the two hens, the only birds of the household. But for them Rudy did not care much.

Though he was so little he had travelled, and for so tiny a lad had travelled far. He was born away in Canton Valais and brought hither over the mountains. Not long ago he had paid a visit on foot to the Staubbach, which shimmers in the air like a silver veil opposite the snow-covered dazzling white mountain, the "Jungfrau". He had been in Grindelwald too, at the great glacier, but that was a sad tale. There his mother met her death, and there, said his grandfather, little Rudy's childish gladness was lost. "When the boy was not yet a year old, he laughed more than he cried," his mother had written, but from the time when he sank into the ice chasm, another spirit took hold of him. His grandfather seldom spoke of this, but it was known over the whole mountain.

Rudy's father had been a postilion, and the big dog which lay in the room beside Rudy's grandfather had always followed him on his journeys over the Simplon and down to the Lake of Geneva. Rudy's kinsfolk on the farther side still lived in the Rhone valley in Canton Valais. His uncle was a clever chamois hunter and a well-known guide. Rudy was only one year old when he lost his father, and his mother was anxious to return with her child to her own kinsfolk in the Bernese Oberland. Her father lived some hours' journey out of Grindelwald, he was a wood carver, and earned enough by his trade to live on. In the month of June she set out homewards with her child, accompanied by two chamois hunters, and crossed the Gemmi towards Grindelwald. They had got over the greater part of the distance, and had reached the snowfield beyond the ridge, and already they were looking into their own home valley, with all the familiar timber houses, and had only the one big glacier to cross. The freshly fallen snow hid a cleft which, although not reaching to the water-washed rock below, was yet very much deeper

the animals belonging to the household. There was a big dog called Ajola which had belonged to Rudy's father, and there was a cat also. This cat was held in special honour by Rudy because it had taught him to climb.

"Just come with me up to the roof!" the cat had said quite plainly and clearly, for when you are a child and cannot yet speak, you understand quite well what the hens and ducks say. The cats and dogs speak quite as plainly as father and mother, only to know what they say you must be really quite little. Grandfather's stick itself can then neigh and become a real horse with a head and legs and tail. Some children keep this power of understanding things later than others, and then people say that they are backward and long in growing up. But people will say anything!

"Come up with me to the roof, Rudy!" was about the first thing that the cat said, and that Rudy understood. "What people say about falling off is pure imagination, you don't fall down unless you are afraid. Come along, put one paw here, the other there; feel in front with your fore paws. You must have eyes in your head and supple limbs. When you come to a hole just jump and hold fast as I do!"

And Rudy did it too. He often sat on the roof top with the cat, and in the tree tops. Yes, and high up on the rocky ledges where the cat couldn't come.

"Higher yet!" said the trees and bushes. "Look how we climb, how high we reach, how firmly we hold, even on the farthest and narrowest ledges!"

Rudy often reached the mountain peaks before the sun was on them, and there sipped his morning draught of the fresh invigorating mountain air, the draught which God alone knows how to brew. Only from Him may men learn how it is made, of the fresh fragrance of the mountain plants, and of the mint and thyme of the valley. All the heaviness of the air is sucked up by the overhanging clouds, and the wind smoothes and draws it over the pine tops. The spirit of fragrance, light and fresh, remains behind. And this was Rudy's morning draught.

The sunbeams, blessing-bringing daughters of the sun, kissed his cheeks. Vertigo stood in ambush but dared not

duetion Vertigo has many brothers, quite a band of them, and the Ice Maiden chose the strongest of the many to serve her. They carry on their calling everywhere. They sit on the staircase and railings of towers, they run like squirrels along rock ledges, they leap over banisters and foot-bridges, and tread the air as the swimmer cleaves the water, and lure their living prey hither and thither till they fall into the abyss. Vertigo and the Ice Maiden both clutch hold of men, as the polypus seizes everything that comes within his reach. Vertigo was now to seize upon Rudy.

"Yes, I am to lay hold of him," said Vertigo, "but it is not possible. That beast of a cat has taught him her tricks. The lad has a power of his own which repels me. I cannot reach him even when he hangs on a branch over the precipice. If I could, how gladly would I tickle the soles of his feet or push him headlong through the air, but I cannot."

"We must do it!" said the Ice Maiden, "either you or I must, I myself will do it."

"No, no," resounded all round her like an echo of pealing bells in the mountains. It was an answering song, a united chorus of the opposing spirits of nature, the kindly loving spirits, the daughters of the sunbeams. They rest every evening in a circle on the mountain top; they stretch out their rosy wings, ever flaming red with the setting sun, and a glow spreads over the high Alps. And this men call the alpenglow. When the sun is set they withdraw within the white snow upon the mountain top and sleep there till the sun rises, and then they come forth again. Especially dear to them are the flowers, the butterflies, and men, and among the last Rudy was a prime favourite.

"You will not catch him! You will not master him!" said they.

"Bigger and stronger have I caught than he!" said the Ice Maiden.

Then sang the sun's daughters a song of the wanderer whose mantle the storm carried away. "The wind took the cloak but not the man. You can catch him but you cannot hold him fast, ye children of might! He is stronger, he is more spiritual than we ourselves! He climbs higher, like the

than the height of a man. The young woman, who was carrying the child, slipped, sank down, and was lost to sight. They heard neither scream nor groan, there was only the wail of a little child. More than an hour passed before the two guides could get ropes and poles from the nearest houses below to help to raise them, and after many efforts two dead bodies, as it seemed, were brought from the icy cleft. Every means was tried to restore them to life. With the child they succeeded, but the mother was gone past recall, and his daughter's child came to the old grandfather's house an orphan—a boy who used to smile more than he cried, but it seemed as if now laughter was gone out of him, and the change must have been wrought in the glacier cleft, in the cold, strange ice-world, where the souls of the lost are imprisoned till the Last Day—so the Swiss peasant believes.

The glacier lies like a rushing stream that has been frozen to ice and squeezed into glassy green blocks, one great ice-block thrown upon another. Below in the depths rushes the boiling flood of melted snow and ice. Deep caverns and wide chasms lie beneath forming a wonderful glass palace where dwells the Ice Maiden, the Glacier Queen. She, the death-bringer, the destroyer, is at once the child of the air and the mighty mistress of the river. Therefore she can betake herself with the swiftness of the chamois to the highest peak of the snow mountain, where even fearless mountaineers must hew steps in the ice for their feet. She sails on the frail pine twig on the surface of the raging torrent, and leaps lightly from iceberg to iceberg, wrapped in her long snow-white hair and her blue-green garments that sparkle like the water in the deep Swiss lakes.

"Mine is the power to seize and to crush!" she cries. "They stole from me a beautiful boy whom I kissed, but had not kissed to death. He is again among men, he tends goats on the mountains, he climbs upwards, ever higher, far away from the others, but not from me! He is mine, I shall draw him to me!"

She gave Vertigo the order to act for her, for it was too hot for the Ice Maiden in the summertime where the green mint grows, and Vertigo climbed up and down in every

dog had a drink, and there were sweetmeats for it, but it sniffed about a great deal and would not touch them, so she ate them up herself. I was running alongside in the mud, as hungry as a dog could be, and deep in my own thoughts. There was something wrong there, but there are many other things quite as far wrong. Would you like to lie in someone's lap and to drive in a carriage? I would not grudge you that pleasure, but by one's own exertions one can't accomplish it. I have not been able to do so, either by barking or by howling."

This was Ajola's speech, and Rudy threw his arms round him and kissed him heartily on his moist nose. Then he took the cat in his arms, but she struggled with him.

"You are getting too strong for me, and I don't want to use my claws against you. You only climb on the mountains now, but it was I who taught you to climb! Only make up your mind that you can't fall down, and then you will be quite safe."

Then the cat jumped away, for she did not wish Rudy to notice that there were tears in her eyes.

The hens were strutting round the room, one of them had lost her tail. A traveller who thought himself a sportsman had shot off her tail, taking the hen for a bird of prey.

"Rudy is going away over the mountains," said one of the hens.

"He is always in such a hurry!" said the other. "I don't wish to say goodbye," and thereupon they both trotted off.

He said goodbye to the goats, and they bleated then wish to go with him, and their bleating was quite mournful.

Two trusty guides belonging to the neighbourhood, who were going over the mountains to the other side close to the Gemmi, took Rudy with them, he following them on foot. It was a rough walk for such a little boy, but he was strong and full of courage.

The swallows flew a little way with him. "We and you! You and we!" they sang. The path led across the rushing Lutschine, which comes in several small streams out of the black mouth of the Grindelwald glacier. The bridge here is made of loose tree trunks and blocks of stone. When they came to the alder wood they began to climb the moun-

sun, our mother; he has the magic spell that binds the wind and the water, so that they must serve and obey him. You loosen the heavy crushing weight of his mortality, and he rises still higher!"

Gloriously rang out the chiming choir

Every morning the sunbeams streamed through the single little window of the grandfather's house and shone on the sleeping child. The daughters of the sunbeams kissed him, they wanted to melt and dissolve the icy kiss that the queenly Maiden of the glaciers had given him, when he lay on the bosom of his dead mother in the deep ice cleft, and was recovered from there as by a miracle.

II THE JOURNEY TO THE NEW HOME

Rudy was now eight years old. His uncle beyond the mountains, in the Rhone valley, wished the boy to come to him. He wished the boy to learn some trade, and to get on better than he had hitherto done. His grandfather quite agreed with his uncle, and allowed Rudy to go, so he took his leave. Besides his grandfather there were others to whom farewell must be said, and the first of these was the old dog Ajola.

"Your father was a postilion and I was his dog," said Ajola. "We journeyed up and down together, and I know the dogs and the men too on the other side of the mountain. I never was good at talking, but now that we shall not have much longer to talk to one another, I will say a little more than usual. I will tell you a tale which I have long kept to myself as I wandered about, and over which I have long reflected. I don't understand it, and you will not understand it either, but that's no matter. This much I have at least mastered, that in the world there is great inequality both among dogs and among men! All are not born to lie at ease or to lap milk. I have not been petted in that way, but I have seen a little dog riding in the mail coach and taking a human being's place in it. The lady who was his mistress, or whose master he was carried a bottle of milk with her, from which the little



THE ICE MAIDEN KISSES RUDY

bees, lay in heaps dead upon the snow. they had ventured too high, or the wind had driven them so high that they had perished from the cold. Round the Wetterhorn there hung, like a fine black wisp of wool, a threatening cloud which was settling down lower, heavy with what it hid within it. It was a Fohn, and a violent one too, if it should burst forth. Rudy was so struck with what he saw and with what took place, that he would never forget this journey. He would always bear in mind the steep path, the encampment for the night up there on the mountain, the way beyond, the deep clefts in the rocks where the water, during endless years, had sawn through the blocks of stone.

A deserted stone building on the farther side of the snow sea gave them shelter for the night, here they found charcoal and fir branches, and soon a fire was kindled and then resting-place for the night made ready as well as they could. Then the men sat round the fire, smoked their pipes and drank the warm spiced drink they had brewed themselves, and of which Rudy had his share. Then tales were told of the strange and wonderful beings that live among the Alps, the great serpents of the lakes, the hosts of spectres that haunt the night and bear the sleeper through the air to the wonderful floating town of Venice, of the wild shepherd, too, who drives his black sheep over the meadows. These have never yet been seen, but the tinkling of their little bells has been heard, and the uncanny bleating of the herd. Rudy listened eagerly, but without any fear, for he was utterly fearless, and while he listened he could almost fancy he heard the ghostly hollow din, yes, it was getting clearer, the men heard it too, they paused in their talk, they listened and told Rudy he must not sleep.

It was a Fohn, that furious storm wind which hurls itself down from the mountain into the valley and snaps off the tree trunks as if they were but slender reeds, and lifts the timbered houses from one river bank to the other as one moves a pawn on the chessboard.

After about an hour the men told Rudy that the storm was past and he might go to sleep, the boy was weary with the long march, and slept at once when they bade him.

tain where the glacier has broken from the mountain-side; and now they stepped over and round ice blocks that had fallen on to the glacier. Rudy had to take now one way, now another, his eyes sparkled joyfully, and he stepped so firmly with his iron-tipped mountain shoes, that he left a mark at every step. The black earth which the stream had spread over the glacier made it look as if it had melted, and yet the bluish-green glassy ice shone through it. They had to go round the little pools which were formed by the surrounding ice-blocks. While thus making a detour, they drew near a large stone which lay balanced on the edge of a fissure in the ice. The stone lost its balance and rolled down, and the echo resounded from the deep hollow chasms of the glacier.

The way led always upwards. The glacier itself stretches upwards like a stream of wild heaped-up masses of ice squeezed between steep rocks. Rudy thought for a moment of what had been told him, of how he and his mother had lain deep down in one of these chilly chasms, but he soon drove these thoughts away, and this story appeared to him just like all the other tales of which so many had been told to him. Now and then, when the men thought that the way was too trying for the little lad, they held out a hand to him, but he was not tired, and stood firmly like a chamois on the slippery ice. They were now following the moraine, and stepping at one time between rough stones, at another among fir trees, and again out upon the green meadows, but always through new and ever-changing scenery. All round rose the snow mountains whose names, "Jungfrau", "Monch", "Eiger", were well known to every child as well as to Rudy, Rudy had never before been so high up, never till then set foot upon the spreading sea of ice. Here it lay around with its motionless snow waves, from which now and then the wind would blow away a flake as it raises the foam from the waves of the sea. The glaciers stand here, so to speak, hand in hand. Each is a glass palace for the Ice Maiden, who has both the power and the will to seize and imprison the careless traveller. The sun shone warm, the snow was glittering, and looked as if it had been sprinkled with pale-blue sparkling diamond points. Innumerable insects, mostly butterflies and

counted one of the family and was well fed. Rudy patted him, but the dog did not care for strangers, and Rudy was still a newcomer, but he did not long remain a stranger, he soon became at home with all and was taken to their hearts.

"Here in Canton Valais we are not badly off," said the uncle. "We have the chamois, which does not die out so quickly as the wild goat, we are much better off now than we used to be. Though the olden times are held in honour, ours are really much better, the sack has been opened, and the breeze blows through our narrow valley. When the old things are worn out, something better always turns up," he said, and when he was in a talkative mood he would tell tales of his youth and even farther back to the hardy times of his father, when Valais, as he put it, was still an unopened sack, full of many sick people, wretched Cretins, "but the French soldiers came in, they were capital doctors, they killed off all sickness—and the sick people too. Oh yes, the French understood fighting, and knew how to fight a battle in more ways than one, and the girls knew too!" Then the uncle nodded to his wife, who was a Frenchwoman, and laughed. "The French have even overcome the rocks, and that is a feat indeed. They have cut the Simplon road through the cliffs, so that I can say to a child of three years, 'Go right down into Italy, keep straight on the high road', and the child will arrive right away in Italy, if it just keeps to the high road." Then the uncle sang a French song and cried, "Hurrah! long live Napoleon Buonaparte!"

This was the first time Rudy had ever heard of France and of Lyons, the great city on the Rhone where his uncle had once dwelt.

It would not be many years before Rudy would be an agile chamois hunter, he was the right stuff for it, said his uncle, he it was who taught Rudy to hold his gun, to aim, and to shoot. He took him with him during the hunting season to the mountains and made him drink the warm blood of the chamois, which is said to keep the hunter from giddiness, he taught him to distinguish the times on the different mountains when the avalanches are likely to fall, morning or afternoon, according as they are exposed to the sunbeams, he taught

The next morning they started off again. This day the sun shone on mountains quite new to Rudy, on glaciers and snowfields. They entered Canton Valais, and reached the other side of the ridge which you can see from Grindelwald, though it is still far distant from the new home. Other chasms came in sight, other pastures, woods, and rocky paths. Other houses and other men appeared, and oh, such strange men! They were deformed, with strange faces all greasy and yellow, and from their necks hung dreadful hard lumps of flesh like bags. These were Cretins who crawled about painfully, looking at the strangers with lack-lustre eyes. The women looked even more dreadful than the men. Were the people of his new home to be like these?

III THE UNCLE

At his uncle's house where Rudy lived now the people were happily just like those he had been accustomed to, there was only a single Cretin, a poor crazy boy, one of those wretched beings who in Valais go from house to house to have their wants relieved, staying a couple of months with each family. Poor Saperli had just come when Rudy arrived.

The uncle was still a clever huntsman, and was by trade also a cooper, his wife was a lively little person with a face like a bird, eyes like an eagle, and a long hairy neck. Everything was new to Rudy—dress, customs, and manners, even the speech, but this his childish ear would soon understand. In comparison with his grandfather's house, this one seemed very comfortable. The room was bigger, the walls were adorned with chamois horns and brightly polished guns. Over the door hung a picture of the Virgin Mary, fresh alpenroses and a lighted lamp stood before it.

Rudy's uncle was, as we have said, one of the cleverest chamois hunters in the whole neighbourhood, and also one of the best guides. Rudy soon became the pet of the household, but there was already another pet, an old blind and deaf dog who no longer went a-hunting as he used to do. His former good qualities had not been forgotten, and so the beast was

"Hold fast, Rudy!" cried his uncle, "hold with all your might!"

And Rudy clung tightly to the nearest tree trunk. His uncle clambered above him to the branches and held on there while the avalanche rolled down a few feet away from them. But the wind that followed it, the storm wings of the avalanche, snapped off trees and bushes all about as if they were only withered rushes, and scattered them far around. Rudy lay cowering on the ground, the tree to which he had clung had been snapped in two and the top flung far away. There among the broken branches lay his uncle with his skull fractured, his hand still warm but his face not recognizable. Rudy stood pale and trembling, it was the first fear he had ever felt in his life, the first horror he had experienced.

Late in the evening he returned with his terrible news to the home that was now a house of mourning. The poor wife neither spoke nor wept till the corpse was brought back, then came a passionate burst of sorrow. The poor Cretin crept away to bed and was not to be seen for the whole of the next day, but in the evening he came to Rudy.

"Will you write a letter for me?" he asked, "Saperli cannot write. Saperli can take the letter to the post."

"A letter from you?" asked Rudy. "And to whom?"

"To the Lord Christ!"

"To whom, do you say?"

And the poor idiot, as they called the Cretin, looked at Rudy most pathetically, clasped his hands, and said solemnly and aimlessly

"Jesus Christ! Saperli wants to send him a letter, to ask him to let Saperli lie dead and not the master of the house!"

Rudy took his hand and said, "We cannot send a letter to Him, nor would it give the master back to us."

It was not easy for Rudy to make him clearly understand the impossibility

"Now you must be the support of the house," said his aunt and foster-mother, and that was what Rudy became from that hour.

him to observe the chamois and how it leaped, so that he might land on his feet and stand firm. When there was no foothold in the rocky fissures, he must hold fast with his elbows, loins, and calves, even cling with the nape of his neck, if it was necessary. The chamois are cunning—they send out scouts, but the hunter must be more cunning and not go to windward of them, but circumvent them. One day when Rudy was hunting with his uncle, the latter hung his coat and hat on his alpenstock, and the chamois took the coat for a man.

The path here was narrow, indeed it was hardly a path, only a faint track along the yawning precipice. The snow lying here was half thawed, and the stones crumbled beneath their feet. The uncle lay flat down and crept forwards. Every fragment that broke off from the rocks fell and rebounded, striking from one cliff to the other until it came to rest at the bottom. Rudy stopped about a hundred paces behind his uncle on a firm piece of projecting rock. From there he saw a big vulture circling in the air and hovering above his uncle, it would have liked to cast him into the abyss with a blow of its wing and make of him its prey. The uncle had no eyes for anything but the chamois, which he could see with its kid on the other side of the chasm. Rudy kept his eye on the bird, and knowing its purpose he was in readiness to fire. Suddenly the chamois made one leap, the uncle fired, and the animal was struck by the deadly bullet, but the kid flew off as if it had been accustomed during a long time to danger and escape. The great bird, scared by the report of the gun, took flight in another direction. His uncle was quite unaware of the danger he had been in till he learnt it from Rudy.

Whilst they were making their way homeward in high good humour, and the uncle was whistling a song of his youth, they suddenly heard an odd sound quite near them. On looking round them, up above on a rocky slope the snow covering rose up, moving like a wave or like a piece of stretched linen when wind passes over it. The snow waves, formerly smooth and firm like a sheet of marble, burst and dissolved in a foaming, plunging flood which rumbled like distant thunder, it was an avalanche which was sweeping down, not directly on to Rudy and his uncle, but close to them, and alas! too close.

with little towers roofed with wooden tiles, and overlaid with tin plates, which glittered in the sunshine and in the moonlight. The largest of the towers holds a weathercock—a glittering arrow piercing an apple, and recalling Tell's shot. The mill looks neat and comfortable, and was often painted and written about, but the miller's daughter could neither be painted nor described, so at least Rudy would have said, and yet her image was engraved deeply in his heart. Her eyes had cast there a beam which had kindled a veritable flame. It sprang up suddenly as do other fires, and the most curious thing about it was that the miller's daughter, pretty Babette, had no idea of it. She and Rudy had never spoken a word to each other.

The miller was rich, and this wealth set Babette on a pedestal, and made it hard to approach her. But there is nothing so high that it can't be attained, you must just climb, and you won't fall down if only you don't fancy you will. This Rudy had already learnt at home.

Once it happened that Rudy had some business in Bex, it was quite a journey there, and the railway had not yet been made. From the Rhone glacier, by the foot of the Simplon, between many different mountain summits, the broad Rhone valley stretches with its mighty river the Rhone, which often overflows its banks and floods fields and roads, destroying everything. Between the towns of Sion and St Maurice the valley makes a bend like an elbow, and beyond St Maurice it contracts so much that there is only room for the bed of the river and the narrow roadway. An old tower stands like a sentinel for Canton Valais, which ends here, and looks over the stone bridge to the toll-house on the other side, there Canton Vaud begins, and not much farther on the next town is Bex. At each step the vegetation becomes more abundant and more luxuriant—it is like a garden of chestnuts and walnuts. Here and there appear cypresses and pomegranates. It is warm here as it is in the south, as it is in Italy.

Rudy arrived in Bex, transacted the business he had to do there, and looked round the town, but not a glimpse did he catch of any miller's lad, not to speak of Babette. That was not as it should be.

IV BABETTE

Who is the best shot in the Canton Valais? The chamois knew well who was "Beware of Rudy", they might have said Who is the handsomest marksman? "That is Rudy", said the maidens, but *they* did not say, "Beware of Rudy" Nor did the anxious mothers say so, for he bowed to them quite as pleasantly as to the young maidens How bright and cheery he was, with his sunburnt cheeks, dazzling white teeth, and sparkling black eyes, he was a handsome fellow, just twenty years old The icy cold water could not hurt him when he was swimming In the water he could turn and twist like a fish, and no other could climb like him, he would stick fast to the cliffs like a snail He had good muscles and sinews, as he showed in his leaping, which he had learned first from the cat and then from the chamois Rudy was the best of guides, one whom the traveller could trust to, he might have made quite a fortune as a guide He did not at all care for the cooper work which his uncle had also taught him, his delight was in chamois hunting, and that was profitable too Rudy was a good match, they said, if only he did not look too high for a wife He was a good dancer, and the maidens dreamed of him, one or two were always thinking of him even when awake

"He kissed me in the dance," said Annette, the school-master's daughter, to her dearest friend, but she should not have told that even to her dearest friend Such things are not easy to keep secret—they are like sand in a sieve, they run through It was soon known that Rudy, good and brave as he was, kissed the girls in the dance, and still he had not kissed the one whom he wished most to kiss.

"Oh yes," said an old hunter, "he kissed Annette, he began with A, and will soon kiss through the whole alphabet!"

A kiss in the dance was all the busy tongues could say against him. He had certainly kissed Annette, and yet she was not at all the flower of his heart

Below in the valley, near Bex, among the great walnut trees on the banks of a little rapid mountain stream, lived the rich miller The dwelling-house was a large three-storied building,

but Rudy had no mind for this kind of talk. He knocked. No one heard him, no one opened the door to him. If Rudy had been still a child he would have understood at once that the cat had just said, "There is no one at home." But now he had to go across to the mill to enquire, and there he was told that the miller had gone on a journey to Interlaken, and Babette had gone with him. There was a great shooting match there, to begin to-morrow and last for a week. People from all the German cantons would be there.

Poor Rudy! It could not be said that he had chosen a lucky day for his visit to Bex, he had just to go home again. So he set out past Sion and St. Maurice to his own valley and his own mountains, but he did not despair. When the sun rose next day his good spirits were quite restored, indeed he never lost them.

"Babette is in Interlaken, many days' journey from here," he said to himself. "It is a long way there if you take the high road, but not so far if you cross over the mountains, and that is just the road for a chamois hunter. I have gone that way before, my old home is over there, where I was as a child with my grandfather, and there is a shooting match at Interlaken. I will go too and I will be the first in the match, and I will be beside Babette, when once I have made her acquaintance."

With his light knapsack containing his Sunday clothes on his back, his gun and his game bag on his shoulder, Rudy climbed up the hill by the short cut, which yet was rather long, but the shooting had begun only to-day, and was to last the whole week, and perhaps longer. During all that time the miller and his daughter were to remain with their relatives in Interlaken, so he had been told. Rudy tramped over the Gemmi, for he wanted to descend by Grindelwald.

Briskly and gaily he strode upwards in the fresh, light, bracing mountain air. The valley seemed to sink always lower and the horizon to become wider; here a snowy summit, there another, and soon the glittering white chain of the Alps. Rudy knew each peak, he made straight for the Schreckhorn, which points its stony, white-powdered finger high into the blue air. At last he surmounted the high

It was evening, and the air was full of the scent of wild thyme and lime blossom. Over the green woods on the mountain-sides lay, as it were, an airy veil of shimmering blue. Far and wide there reigned a stillness, not of sleep nor of death, but as if all nature held her breath and felt herself waiting to have her image reflected on the blue background of the sky. Here and there among the trees in the green fields stood the poles that support the telegraph wires running through the quiet valley. Against one of these leant an object so motionless it might have been taken for the trunk of a tree, it was Rudy who stood there, as still as was all around him at that moment. He was not asleep, still less was he dead, but just as great events are often flashed over the telegraph wires, momentous and important for individual persons, without the wire indicating it by any quiver or sound, so weighty, overwhelming thoughts were thrilling through Rudy—the happiness of his life, his constant thought from this time onward. His eyes were fixed on one point—a light which appeared amongst the foliage from the miller's sitting-room where Babette lived. Rudy stood so still, you might have thought he was aiming at a chamois, only he himself at this moment was like the chamois, which seems as if hewn out of the rock for minutes at a time, till suddenly, when a stone rolls down, it springs up and flies away, and this is just what Rudy did when a sudden thought crossed his mind.

"Never despair!" he cried. "I'll pay a visit to the mill, and say good evening to the miller and good evening to Babette. You don't fall down if only you don't imagine you will. Babette must see me sometime if I am to be her husband."

Full of courage, Rudy laughed and strode on to the mill. He knew exactly what he wanted. He wanted Babette.

The river flowed on over its pale-yellow bed, willows and lime trees hung over the hurrying waters. Rudy strode along the path to the miller's house. But as the children sing—

"There was no one here at home,
Only the kitten out did roam!"

The cat on the doorstep arched its back and said "Mew!"

home was filled, and as if they had been set down there and had cleverly grown bigger, just like the old chestnut trees. Every house was a hotel, as it was called, with carved wood-work round the windows and balconies, with projecting roofs polished and decorated. In front of each house was a flower garden between it and the broad paved highway. Along this stretched the houses, but only on one side, else they would have covered up the fresh green meadow, in which the cows wandered with bells at their necks that tinkled as they do in the high pastures. The meadow was surrounded by high hills receding, as it were, in the middle, so that you could quite clearly see the shining snow-covered Jungfrau, that most beautifully shaped of all the Swiss mountains.

What a crowd of well-dressed ladies and gentlemen from foreign lands! What a throng of country people from the various cantons! Each marksman wore his number in a band round his hat. There was music and singing, barrel organs, trumpets, shouts and cries. Houses and bridges were decked with emblems and verses, flags and banners waved, the guns fired shot after shot, and in Rudy's ear the shots were the finest music. In the midst of the excitement he quite forgot Babette, on whose account he had come hither. The marksmen pressed forward for the target shooting. Rudy soon stood among them, and was the cleverest and luckiest of all, his shot always hit the bull's eye.

"Who may that strange young huntsman be?" they asked. "He speaks the French that they speak in Canton Valais—he makes himself quite well understood in our German," said some. "When he was a child he must have lived here in the neighbourhood of Grindelwald," was the conclusion of one of the hunters.

And this strange youth was full of life, his eyes flashed, his aim and arm were steady and sure, so he always hit the mark. Courage brings success, and Rudy was always brave. Soon he had gathered a circle of friends round him, to pay court to him and admire him—Babette had vanished from his thoughts. Then a heavy hand was laid on his shoulder, and a deep voice spoke to him in French.

"You are from Canton Valais?"

ridge, the grassy pastures sloped away towards the valley where his home lay. The air was light, and his heart was light too, mountain and valley were richly decked with flowers and verdure, his heart was full of youthful vigour, remote from any thought of age and death—open only to life, power, joy. Free as a bird, and light too as a bird was he. And the swallows flew over him, and sang as they had sung in his childhood, "We and you! You and we!" All was joyous movement.

Down below lay the velvety green meadows studded with brown timbered houses, where the Lutschine rolled and rumbled. He saw the glacier with its glassy green edges and dirty snow, he looked into the deep clefts, he saw the upper and the lower glaciers. The sound of the church bells came across to him as if they were ringing a welcome home. His heart beat faster, and it swelled so full of memories that Babette vanished from it for a moment.

He stepped once more in the path where he had stood as a boy with the other children selling carved houses. Up there behind the wood his grandfather's house was still standing, but strangers lived in it now. Children came running to meet him, trying to trade, one of them offered him an alpenrose, and Rudy took it as a good omen, and thought of Babette. Soon he had crossed the bridge where the two Lutschine meet, the foliage was thicker here, and the walnut trees made a pleasant shade. Now he saw the flags waving, the white cross on the red ground, the Swiss and Danish emblems, and Interlaken lay in front of him.

It was certainly a splendid town, unlike any other, thought Rudy, a little Swiss town in its holiday dress. It did not look like other towns, a clumsy pile of dull stone houses, unfamiliar and stately. Oh no! it looked just as if the wooden houses from the mountain above had run down into the green valley and set themselves in a row by the clear swift-flowing stream, forming a somewhat irregular but still charming street. The finest of all the streets had certainly been built since Rudy was here as a boy. It looked to him as if it was made up of all the neat little houses which his grandfather used to carve, and with which the cupboard at

were so many people there and such a crowd that Rudy had to offer his arm to Babette. He was so glad, he said, to have met people from Vaud. Vaud and Valais are good neighbours. He spoke so heartily of his happiness, that Babette could not refrain from pressing his hand. They went on side by side as if they were old acquaintances. She talked and chatted, and was more charming than ever, thought Rudy, as she made remarks on what was droll and uncommon in the dress and behaviour of the foreign ladies, for she did not do it maliciously, because Babette knew well that they might be nice good dear people. She herself had a godmother who was just such a grand English lady. Eighteen years before, when Babette was christened, her godmother had been in Bex, she had given Babette the valuable brooch which she wore on her breast. Her godmother had written to her twice, and this year they were to have met her in Interlaken with her daughters: the daughters were old maids, nearly thirty, said Babette—who was only eighteen.

From her sweet little mouth came a ceaseless flow of talk, and everything that Babette said sounded in Rudy's ears like things of the greatest importance. Then in return he told her what he had to tell—how often he had been in Bex, how well he knew the mill, and how often he had seen Babette, while she had likely never noticed him, and finally, how he had been to the mill full of thoughts which he could not express, how she and her father had gone far away, but still not so far that he could not climb the wall which made the way so long.

Yes, he told her all this and much more, he told her how much he loved her—and that he had come there on her account, and not for the shooting match.

Babette listened to it all in silence. She felt that it was almost too much, and it troubled her. Whilst they wandered on, the sun set behind the high cliffs. The "Jungfrau" stood there, glorious and shining, encircled by the green woods of the neighbouring hills. Everyone stood gazing at the beautiful scene, Rudy and Babette were delighted.

"There can be nothing more beautiful than this," said Babette.

Rudy turned round and saw a jolly red face and a stout figure. It was the rich miller of Bex. His portly person hid the delicate, dainty Babette who, however, soon looked out at Rudy with her brilliant dark eyes. The rich miller was much pleased that the best shot was a hunter from his own canton, and that such universal honour was paid to him. Now Rudy was certainly in luck's way, what he had travelled so far to seek, but had at the moment forgotten, had sought him out of itself.

When fellow countrymen fall in with one another far away from home, they are glad to speak to one another and make friends. By his fine shooting Rudy had won for himself the foremost place at the match, just as the miller was foremost at home in Bex because of his wealth and his good mill. So the men shook hands for the first time, and Babette held out her hand to Rudy cordially. He pressed her hand and gazed so hard at her that she became rosy red all over.

The miller spoke of the long distance they had travelled hither, and of the many big towns they had seen; in his opinion they had made quite a long journey, and they had travelled by steamboat, by rail, and also in a post carriage.

"I came by the shorter way," said Rudy. "I came over the mountains, there is no way so high as to be impossible."

"Yes, and break your neck!" said the miller. "And you look to me just as if you might break your neck some day, you are so foolhardy."

"Oh, but you don't fall if only you are confident," said Rudy.

The relatives of the miller in Interlaken, whom the miller and Babette were visiting, invited Rudy to call on them—he was from the same canton as the miller. This was a good offer for Rudy, fortune smiled on him, as it always does on the man who relies on himself and bears in mind that "God gives us the nuts, but does not crack them for us."

Rudy was received by the miller's relations as if he belonged to the family, and a glass was emptied to the health of the best shot. Babette touched glasses with him, and Rudy returned thanks for the toast.

Towards evening they all strolled along the beautiful road by the stately hotels under the old walnut trees, and there

my wits about me Thou hast left thine down in the valley. Up here one must think of the Ice Maiden, for they say she is not well-disposed to men "

"I fear her not," said Rudy "She had to give me up when I was a child, so I will not yield myself to her now that I am a man "

And then darkness came on, rain fell, it began to snow, and the air grew white and dazzling

"Give me thy hand," said the maiden, "I will help thee to climb," and he felt the touch of her icy fingers

"Wouldst thou help me?" said Rudy "I do not yet need the aid of a woman," and he strode more quickly forward, away from her The snowstorm wrapped him as in a veil, the wind whistled, and behind him he heard the maiden laugh and sing How strange it sounded! "That must have been a spectre in the service of the Ice Maiden," thought he Rudy had heard of such when he was still a child, and had spent the night up here on his way over to the mountains

The snow fell less thickly, the clouds lay beneath him, he looked back, and there was no one to be seen, but he heard laughter and shouting, and it was no sound of human voice

When Rudy at last reached the highest point from which the path led down into the Rhone valley, he saw in the direction of Chamounix two bright stars shining in a clear blue tract of sky They twinkled brightly, and he thought of Babette, of himself and of his good fortune, and the thought warmed his heart

VI THE VISIT TO THE MILL

"What wonderful things you are bringing home!" said the old foster-mother, and her strange eagle's eyes flashed, and she moved her skinny neck even quicker than usual in curious twistings "You are lucky, Rudy I must kiss you, my dear boy "

And Rudy allowed himself to be kissed, but his face showed plainly that he was only submitting to circumstances, and to a little homely duty.

"Nothing," said Rudy, as he gazed at Babette "Tomorrow I must go home," he said a few minutes later.

"Come and see us in Bex," whispered Babette, "my father will be glad to see you."

V ON THE HOMEWARD WAY

Oh, what a load Rudy had to carry next day when he set off over the high mountains for home! Yes, he had three silver cups, two beautiful rifles, and a silver coffeepot. The coffeepot would be useful when he set up house for himself. But none of these was the weightiest, he carried something more weighty and more mighty, or rather it carried him homewards over the high mountains. The weather was raw and grey, rainy and dull. The clouds hung like a mourning veil on the mountain tops, and shrouded the glittering peaks. From the depths of the woods the last blows of an axe resounded, and the tree trunks rolled down the hillside, looking from the height above like slender sticks, though they were really stout masts for ships. The Lutschine murmured its monotonous refrain, the wind whistled, the clouds sailed on.

Suddenly close by Rudy's side there appeared a young maiden. He had not noticed her till she was quite near him. She too was going to climb up the rocks. The maiden's eyes seemed to have an unearthly power which made one look into them. They were so strange, so crystal clear, so deep and unfathomable.

"Hast thou a lover?" asked Rudy, his thoughts all turned upon love.

"I have none," answered the maiden and laughed, but it was as if she gave no true answer. "Let us not go a roundabout way," she said. "We must keep more to the left, that way is shorter."

"Yes, indeed, and tumble into a crevasse," said Rudy. "Dost thou want to be the guide, and not know the way better than that?"

"I know the way very well," said the maiden, "and I have

The wine flowed and the conversation flowed, and the evening was all too short, so Rudy thought. Yet it was after midnight before he returned home from this first visit to the mill.

The lights shone out for a little while from the window of the mill through the green boughs. From the open skylight on the roof came the parlour cat, and along the gutter came the kitchen cat to meet her.

"Do you know the news in the mill?" asked the parlour cat. "There is secret love-making going on in the house. The father knows nothing of it. Rudy and Babette have been treading on one another's paws under the table all evening. They trod on me twice, but I did not mew, as it would have attracted attention."

"I would have mewed," said the kitchen cat.

"What suits the kitchen does not suit the parlour!" said the parlour cat. "But I should like to know what the miller will say when he comes to hear of the love-making."

Yes, indeed, what would the miller say? Rudy also would have liked to know that, but he could not wait long till he should find out. A few days later, when the omnibus rattled over the Rhone bridge between Valais and Vaud, Rudy sat inside with the same high courage as ever, and indulging in happy thoughts of the favourable answer which he hoped to receive that very evening.

And when the evening came, and the omnibus was passing over the same road, there sat Rudy inside on his way back, but in the mill the parlour cat jumped out with her news.

"Do you know, you from the kitchen? The miller knows it all now. But there's a fine ending to it! Rudy came here towards evening, and he and Babette had much whispering and private conversation together, standing in the path in front of the miller's room. I was lying at their feet, but they had neither eyes nor thoughts for me. 'I am going without further delay to your father,' said Rudy, 'for that is the right thing to do.' 'Shall I go with you?' asked Babette. 'It will give you courage.' 'I have courage enough,' said Rudy, 'but if you are present he must be polite, whether he will or no.' And then they went in. Rudy trod hard

"How handsome you are, Rudy!" said the old woman

"Don't make me conceited," said Rudy, and laughed, but yet he was rather pleased

"I can't help saying it again," said the old woman "You really are lucky"

"Yes, you may be right there," said he, and thought of Babette

Never had he felt such a longing to go down to the deep valley

"They must be home now," he said to himself "It is already two days beyond the time when they were to be back I must go to Bex"

Rudy journeyed to Bex, and found them at home in the mill He was heartily welcomed, and they had brought kind messages for him from the family in Interlaken Babette did not say much, she had become very silent, but her eyes spoke for her, and that was quite enough for Rudy It appeared as if the miller, who generally took the lead in the conversation—for, being the rich miller, he was accustomed to people always laughing at his puns and jokes—preferred to listen to Rudy's tales of adventure So Rudy spoke of the difficulties and dangers which the chamois hunter has to face on the high mountains, how he has to creep along the dangerous snow ledges which are cemented to the rocky edges by wind and weather, and over the frail bridges which the snowstorm has thrown across the deep chasms Bold Rudy's eyes shone as he talked of the hunter's life, of the craftiness of the chamois, of their daring leaps, of the mighty Fohn, and the rolling avalanche He noticed that the miller became more and more interested in each new relation, and he felt that he was specially stirred by what he told him of the vulture and the golden eagle

Now not far away, in Canton Valais, there was an eagle's nest, neatly built under a high projecting cliff In the nest up there was a young eagle There it was, but not to be got at A few days before an Englishman had offered Rudy a whole handful of gold if he would bring him the young eagle alive "But there is a limit to everything", said Rudy "The eagle can't be got—it would be folly to attempt it."

VII THE EAGLE'S NEST

From the rocky path above resounded the Yodel, loud and cheerful, it betokened good temper and intrepid courage. It was Rudy, he was on his way to his friend Vesinand.

"You must lend me a hand. We shall take Nagh with us. I must get the young eagle from the cliff up there."

"Had you not better first go and fetch the man in the moon? That would be just as easy," said Vesinand. "You seem to be in good spirits."

"Yes, indeed, I am thinking of getting married! But speaking seriously, I shall tell you how things stand with me."

And soon Vesinand and Nagh knew what Rudy wanted to do.

"You are a daring fellow," said they. "You cannot do it, you will break your neck."

"One does not fall if one does not fear to fall," said Rudy.

About midnight they set out with poles, ladders, and ropes. The road lay through forest and brushwood, over rolling stones, straight-upwards in the dark night. Water rushed below them, water trickled above them, damp clouds drifted through the air. The hunters reached the overhanging ledge, and here it was darker. The cliffs almost met, and only far above from a narrow cleft was there a glimmering of light. Close to them and under them lay the deep abyss with its roaring waters.

The three men sat down on the rock, they wanted to wait for the dawn, when the eagle would fly out, for the old one must be shot before they could think of getting possession of the young one. Rudy sat there cowering down, as still as if he were a piece of the rock on which he leant. He held his gun cocked in front of him ready to shoot, his eye was fixed steadily on the cleft above, where the eagle's nest lay hidden under the overhanging cliff. The three hunters had a long time to wait. But now there was a crackling and a whirring high above them, and a big floating object darkened the air. Two guns were aimed as the black form flew out of the

on my tail, he is very clumsy I mewed, but neither he nor Babette had ears to hear They opened the door and went in, and I in front I sprang up on the back of a chair, for I could not know that Rudy might not perhaps tread on me But the miller came forward He gave a regular stamp He shouted 'Out of the door, and away to the mountains to the chamois and aim at them, but not at our Babette' "

"What did they say? Did they say anything?" asked the kitchen cat

"What did they say? Everything that people say when they are courting 'I love her and she loves me' And if there is milk in the pail for one, there is milk enough for two' 'But she stands too high for you,' said the miller 'She sits on a heap of gold, as you know you will never reach her'

"'There is nothing too high to be reached if only you make up your mind,' answered Rudy, for he is a bold youth

"'You can't reach the young eagle, you said so yourself, and Babette stands higher than that,' answered the miller

"'I shall get them both,' said Rudy

"'I will give Babette to you when you bring me the young eagle alive,' said the miller, and laughed till the tears came 'But now I thank you for your visit, Rudy, and if you call to morrow there will be no one at home' Goodbye, Rudy'

"And Babette said goodbye too, but as dolefully as a little kitten that has lost its mother

"'An honest man's word is as good as his bond,' said Rudy 'Do not cry, Babette I'll bring the young eagle'

"'You will break your neck, I hope,' said the miller, 'and then we shall be spared your running about here'

"I call that taking a decided step Now Rudy is gone, and Babette is sitting crying, but the miller is singing German that he learnt on his journey I am not going to be sad about it, that does no good"

"But still there is something to look out for," said the kitchen cat.

stretched out his polypus arms towards him. Now he was standing on the topmost rung of the ladder, and became aware that he did not yet reach high enough to see into the nest, he could only stretch up to it with his hand. He tested the firmness of the thick plaited branches which formed the under part of the nest, and after he had secured a thick firm branch he swung himself up from the ladder, pulled on the branch, and now his head and breast were above the level of the nest. From it there streamed to meet him an overpowering stench of rotting bodies, for in the nest lay lambs, chamois, and decaying birds. Vertigo, who could not get the better of him, blew the poisonous vapour in his face, so that he might be bewildered and confused with it, and below in the black yawning depths, on the hurrying waters, sat the Ice Maiden herself with her long pale-green hair, and fixed him with her deadly eyes like two gun barrels.

"Now I have thee!"

In a corner of the nest he saw the eaglet sitting, it was big and powerful, though not yet fully fledged. Rudy fixed his eyes on it, held fast with all his might by one hand, and with the other threw a noose round it. It was taken alive! Its legs were caught fast in the tight cord, and Rudy threw the noose with the bird over his shoulder, so that the creature hung down a good bit below him, whilst he held fast with the help of a rope from above till the tips of his toes again touched the topmost rung of the ladder.

"Hold fast! Don't think of falling and you won't fall!" It was the old lesson which he obeyed, holding fast and clambering, convinced that he would not fall, and he did not fall.

Now a whistle sounded, cheerful and encouraging. Rudy stood on the rock with his young eagle.

VIII THE NEWS THE PARLOUR CAT HAD TO TELL

"Here is what you wanted!" said Rudy, when he entered the miller's house at Bex, setting a big basket on the floor and taking off the cloth which covered it. Two yellow eyes, each with a black ring round it, stared out, flashing wildly as if

nest. A shot was heard. For a moment the outspread wings fluttered, then the bird sank slowly down, and it seemed as if it must fill the whole cleft with its great body and its vast outstretched wings, and involve the hunters in its fall. The eagle sank down into the abyss, breaking branches and bushes in its descent.

Now the hunters bestirred themselves, and three of the longest ladders were bound together. They, it was hoped, would be long enough to reach the nest. They were placed on the very last firm point on the edge of the abyss, but still they did not reach far enough, and the cliff was still higher up where the nest lay hidden in the shelter of the projecting summit smooth as a wall. After some deliberation they agreed that two ladders tied together should be let down from above into the chasm, and that these again should be joined to the three added from below. With great labour the two ladders were dragged up and the ropes made fast above. The ladders were pushed over the projecting cliff and hung free swinging over the abyss. Rudy was already on the lowest rung. It was an icy cold morning, misty clouds rose up from the dark abyss. Rudy remained there as a fly sits on a wavering stalk of straw which some nest-building bird has dropped on the edge of the high chimneystalk, but the insect can fly down from there when the straw gets loose—Rudy could only break his neck. The wind whistled round him, and below in the chasm rushed the waters from the melting glacier, the palace of the Ice Maiden.

Now Rudy set the ladders swinging just as the spider swings her long floating threads when she wants to catch anything, and as for the fourth time he touched the top of the ladders which were erected from below he seized hold of them. With sure and clever hand they were joined together, but they rocked and rattled as if they were all out of joint.

The five long ladders which reached up to the nest and leaned perpendicularly on the cliff looked like a shaking reed. And now the most dangerous risk was to be run. The nest must be reached, climbing as cats climb, but that was just what Rudy understood, the cat had taught him. He was not aware of Vertigo, who trod in the air behind him and

fantastic ice crystals stretched glittering over the snow-sprinkled fir trees. The Ice Maiden rode on the howling wind away over the deepest valleys. A coverlet of snow lay all the way to Bex, the Ice Maiden came thither and saw Rudy sitting in the mill. He sat this winter more indoors than he was accustomed to, for he sat near Babette. The wedding was to be next summer. His ears often tingled, his friends spoke so often of it. There was sunshine in the mill, the alpenrose glowed, merry laughing Babette was beautiful as the coming spring, which makes all the birds sing of summertime and marriage.

"How those two do sit there for ever, and are for ever chatter-chattering!" said the parlour cat. "I have had quite enough of their mewling."

IX THE ICE MAIDEN

Spring had unfolded its delicate garlands of walnut and chestnut trees full of green sap, and spread them from the bridge at St. Maurice along the Rhone right to the shore of the lake of Geneva. The river raced with fiercer sweep from its outlet under the green glaciers, the Ice Palace where the Ice Maiden dwelt. Thence sometimes she let the keen wind bear her to the highest snowfield, and stretched herself in the warm sunlight on the snowy couch. There she lay and gazed with far-reaching glance down into the deep valleys where the people were bestirring themselves briskly, like ants on a rock in the sunshine.

"Spirits of strength, as the children of the sun call you," said the Ice Maiden, "ye are but worms. If a snowball rolls, you and your houses and towns are crushed to powder and wiped out." Higher still she raised her proud head and looked far and wide with death-flashing eyes. But from the valley beneath came a rumbling sound, rocks were being blasted by men at work to form a tunnel for the railroad.

"They are playing at moles' work," she said, "they are digging passages under the earth, and that makes this din like musketry. When I pull down my castles the roaring is louder than the thunderclaps."

Out of the valley there came up smoke which floated in the

they would burn and destroy whatever they looked at. The short, strong beak was outstretched ready to bite, the neck was red and covered with young feathers.

"The young eagle!" cried the miller. Babette shrieked aloud and drew back, but could not take her eyes either off Rudy or the eagle.

"You are not easily daunted," said the miller.

"And you always keep your word," said Rudy. "Every man has his own hallmark."

"But how was it you did not break your neck?" asked the miller.

"Because I held fast," answered Rudy, "and that is what I am doing still. I am holding fast to Babette!"

"First catch your hare then cook it!" said the miller, and laughed, and Babette knew that was a good sign.

"We must have it out of the basket—it is getting furious, look how it glares! But how did you manage to catch it?" Rudy had to tell the tale, while the miller's eyes grew bigger and bigger.

"With your courage and your luck you might keep three wives," said the miller.

"Oh, thank you!" cried Rudy.

"But you have not yet won Babette," said the miller, and playfully slapped the young hunter on the shoulder.

"Do you know the latest news in the mill?" said the parlour cat to the kitchen cat. "Rudy has brought us the young eagle, and is to take Babette in exchange. They kissed each other, and the old man saw them! That is as good as an engagement. The old man was quite civil, he drew in his claws, took his midday nap, and allowed the couple to sit and make love. They have so much to say, they will not be done till Christmas."

And indeed they were not done till Christmas. The wind whirled the withered leaves about, the snow fell in the valley as well as on the high mountains. The Ice Maiden sat in her proud castle, which grew bigger in the wintertime, the cliffs were covered with slippery ice, and icicles as thick as tree trunks and as heavy as elephants hung down where in summer the stream flings its watery veil over the cliff. Garlands of

X. THE GODMOTHER

At Montreux, one of the nearest of the towns which, along with Clarens, Vevay, and Crin, form a circle round the north-east of the lake of Geneva, lived Babette's godmother, the noble English lady, with her daughters and a young relative. They had indeed only come there lately, but the miller had already visited them, and told them of Babette's engagement, told them, too, about Rudy and the young eagle, and the visit to Interlaken, told them, in short, the whole story. This had delighted them, and they were almost as pleased about Rudy and Babette as the miller himself. "All three," they said, "must certainly come over and visit them." And so they were coming now. Babette and her godmother were to see each other.

At the little town of Villeneuve, at the end of the lake of Geneva, lay the steamboat which would in a half-hour carry them from there to Vevay beyond Montreux. The coast here has been made famous by the poets. Here under the walnut trees by the deep blue-green lake sat Byron writing his melodious verses on the prisoner in the gloomy rock castle of Chillon. Where the water reflects Clarens with its weeping willows, Rousseau wandered dreaming of his Heloise. The Rhone flows past beneath the lofty snow-covered mountains of Savoy. Here, not far from the river mouth, there lies in the lake a little island, so small that it looks from the coast like a ship on the water. The island is a piece of rock which about a hundred years ago a certain lady caused to be built up with stones, covered with earth and planted with three acacia trees, which now overshadow the whole island. Babette was charmed with this spot, which she thought the most lovely of the whole journey. They must go over there, for it must be wonderfully beautiful, she thought. But the steamboat passed it by and stopped at Vevay.

The little company walked on from here between the white sunlit walls which surround the vineyards of the little town of Montreux, where fig trees shade the houses of the peasants, and laurels and cypresses grow in their gardens. Halfway

air like a veil It was the drifting plume of the steam engine on the lately opened railway, drawing the train, that winding serpent compact of carriages Swift as an arrow on it flew

"They are playing at being the master down there, these spirits of strength!" said the Ice Maiden "But the powers of nature are still the rulers" She laughed and sang, and there was a rumbling in the valley

"There comes an avalanche rolling down," said the men

But the children of the sun sang still louder, telling of men's devices to prevail over nature, to put a yoke upon the sea, to remove mountains and fill up valleys, all through the power of thought Just at this time a company of travellers was passing over the snowfield where the Ice Maiden was sitting The men were roped carefully together, so that they looked like one huge body on the slippery ice slope at the edge of the deep abyss

"Worms!" said the Ice Maiden "You the lords of nature!" and she turned away from them, and looked maliciously down into the deep valley where the train was rushing along

"There they sit, she thought! There they sit, in their power over nature! I see them, one and all!—One sits proudly like a king, alone! There they sit together in a group! There sleep one half of them! And when the steam dragon stops, they get out and go their way The thoughts go out into the world!" And she laughed

"There goes another avalanche!" they said below in the valley

"It will not reach us," said two who sat at the back of the steam dragon, "two hearts and but one beat", as people say It was Rudy and Babette, the miller was there too

"As luggage," he said, "I am here as the necessary appendage"

"There sit the two!" said the Ice Maiden "Many a chamois have I ground to powder, millions of alpenroses have I snapped off and broken to pieces, not sparing even the root. I will wipe you out too," she thought, "spirits of strength!" And she laughed

"There goes another avalanche!" they said down in the valley

Then her anger broke forth, and that was a relief to her. Otherwise she would have been more deeply grieved, but now she could fall asleep, and she slept the sound sleep of youth.

XII EVIL POWERS

Rudy left Bev and took the homeward road, climbing over the mountains into the fresh cool air, where the snow lay in the domain of the Ice Maiden. The green trees were far below him, and the forests looked like potato tops. Up here the pines and the bushes were stunted, the alpenroses grew close to the snow, which lay in separate little patches, like linen on the bleaching green. With the butt end of his rifle he crushed a blue gentian that grew by the path.

Higher up still two chamois appeared. Rudy's eyes sparkled, and his thoughts took a new direction, but he was not near enough to be sure of his aim. He climbed higher, where the only vegetation was a coarse grass growing among the rocks, the chamois went quietly on to the snowfield, and he quickened his steps. Clouds of mist were gathering thickly round him. Suddenly he found himself at the foot of a steep cliff, the rain began to pour in torrents.

He felt a burning thirst, his head was hot, and his limbs cold. He felt for his flask, but it was empty, he had not remembered to fill it before setting out for the mountain. He had never been ill before, but now he felt as if he might be attacked by sickness. He was tired, he felt an inclination to lie down, an intense desire for sleep, though the rain flooded everything around. He tried to pull himself together, everything wavered and danced curiously before his eyes.

Suddenly he saw what he had never before seen in this spot—a newly built hut close under the cliff. In the doorway stood a young maiden. She looked to him like Annette, the schoolmaster's daughter, whom he had once kissed in the dance, but it was not Annette. Yet he had seen the maiden before, perhaps it was at Grindelwald that evening when he was returning from the shooting match at Interlaken.

"How did you come here?" he asked.

"This is my home. I am watching my herd."

THE ICE MAIDEN

up the hill lay the boarding house where Babette's godmother lived

Their welcome was a hearty one. The godmother was a pleasant woman with a round smiling face. As a child she must have been a real little cherub like Raphael's. Even now she had an angel face, framed in silvery white hair. The daughters were fine, handsome, tall, slender girls. The young cousin who was with them was dressed in white from head to foot, had golden hair and whiskers—such big ones that he might have divided them among three gentlemen—and he began forthwith to pay the greatest attention to Babette.

Richly bound books, sheets of music and drawings lay scattered about the big table. The door to the balcony stood open towards the beautiful far-reaching lake so still and shining, reflecting upside down the mountains of Savoy, its towns, woods, and snow peaks.

Rudy, who was generally bold, happy, and lively, did not feel at all at home here. He moved as if he were walking on peas over a smooth floor. How slowly and tediously the time passed, as if on a treadmill. And now they were going to take a walk! This was just as slow and tiresome. Rudy had to take two steps forward and one backward to keep pace with the others. They walked as far as Chillon, the dark old castle on the rocky island, just to look at the instruments of torture, the deathly dungeons, the rusty chains in the walls, the stone benches for those condemned to death, the trapdoors through which the unhappy prisoners were thrust and impaled on sharp iron spikes in the waves. They called it a great pleasure to see all this. It was a torture chamber lifted by Byron's verse into the world of poetry. Rudy only felt as if it were a place of execution. He leaned out of one of the big stone window frames and looked down into the deep blue-green water and over to the little island with the three acacias and wished himself there, free from the whole chattering company. But Babette was in an unusually gay humour. She had enjoyed herself exceedingly, she said. The cousin, she thought, was quite perfect.

"Yes, a perfect fop!" said Rudy, and it was the first time Rudy had ever said anything that did not please her. The

wonderful clear eyes. This look lasted but a moment, and yet in that moment who can express in words the effect of the look? Was it the spirit of life, or was it the spirit of death that filled him? Was he lifted up on high, or was he sinking into the deep and deadly ice cleft, deep and ever deeper? He saw the ice walls like blue-green grass, endless chasms yawned around him, and the dripping water tinkled like a chime of bells, and gleamed as clear as pearls among pale-blue flames. The Ice Maiden kissed him, and her kiss went through him like an icy shudder. A cry of agony escaped him. He wrenched himself free, staggered, and everything grew dark before his eyes, but he opened them again. The powers of evil had played out their game.

Vanished was the Alpine maiden, vanished the sheltering hut. The water trickled down the bare cliff, snow lay all around. Rudy was shivering with cold, he was soaked to the skin, and his ring had vanished—the engagement ring which Babette had given him. His gun lay in the snow beside him. When he lifted it and tried to fire it off, it missed fire. Moist clouds lay massed like solid snow in the abyss. Vertigo sat there and lay in wait for the helpless prey, and below in the deep chasm it sounded as if a rock had fallen, and was crushing and carrying with it all that retarded its descent.

But in the mill Babette sat and wept. Rudy had not been there for six days, he who was in the wrong, he who must ask her forgiveness, and whom she loved with all her heart.

XIII. IN THE MILL

“What a queer kind of life these men have!” said the parlour cat to the kitchen cat. “Now they are again separated, Babette and Rudy. She weeps, and he thinks no more of her.”

“I don’t like that at all,” said the kitchen cat.

“Nor I,” said the parlour cat. “But I’m not going to take it to heart. Babette can be engaged to the red beard. But he has not come back again either, since he tried that night to get on the roof.”

"Your herd? Where do they graze, then? There is nothing here but snow and rocks!"

"Much you know about what there is here!" said the maiden, laughing "Just here below us there is a splendid meadow! My goats feed there I watch them carefully, and don't lose a single one What is once mine is always mine"

"You are bold," said Rudy

"And so are you," answered the maiden

"If you have any milk in the house, give me some to drink, I am intolerably thirsty"

"I have something better than milk," said the maiden, "and you shall have it Yesterday some travellers passed here with their guides, they left half a flask of wine such as you have certainly never tasted They will never return to fetch it, and I shall not drink it, so you may have it"

And the maiden fetched the wine, poured it into a wooden bowl, and handed it to Rudy

"That is good!" said he "I have never tasted such warming, fiery wine!" His eyes sparkled, and such life and ardour took hold of him that all his sorrow and gloom vanished, and a fresh, alert spirit stirred and swelled within him.

"I believe it is really Annette!" he cried "Give me a kiss!"

"Yes, if you give me the beautiful ring you have on your finger"

"My engagement ring?"

"Yes, just that!" said the maiden, pouring out wine again into the cup, which she set to his lips He drank, and there flowed into his blood such joyful life, the whole world was his, he thought, wherefore should he grieve? All things are created for us to enjoy and to make us happy The stream of life is a stream of joy To be swept away and borne along on its bosom—that is bliss He looked at the young girl—it was Annette, and yet not Annette, and still less was it the phantom, the spectre, as he called it, which he had met near Grindelwald. This maiden here on the mountain was as fresh as the new-fallen snow, blooming as the alpenrose and nimble as a kid, but still, as much of Adam's race as Rudy was He threw his arms round the beautiful girl and looked into her

For Rudy and Babette their greatest joy, their happiest day, as they called their wedding day, was drawing near.

The wedding was not to take place in the church at Bex, nor at the mill. The godmother wished the wedding party to be at her house, and the marriage itself to take place in the pretty little church at Montreux. The miller insisted that this wish should be granted. He alone knew what the godmother intended to do for the newly married couple. They were to receive a wedding present from her which was well worth such a concession to her wishes. The day was fixed. They were to travel to Villeneuve the evening before, so as to sail across the following morning to Montreux in good time, so that her godmother's daughters could dress the bride.

"Surely there will be a wedding feast here at home too?" said the parlour cat. "If not, I won't give a mew for the whole affair."

"There will certainly be a feast here," said the kitchen cat. "Ducks have been slain and pigeons killed, and a whole roebuck is hanging on the wall. My mouth waters when I think of them. Their journey begins to-morrow."

Yes, to-morrow! This evening for the last time Rudy and Babette were sitting in the mill as an engaged couple.

Outside, the Alps were glowing, the evening bells were chiming, the daughters of the sun were singing, "May all go well!"

XIV VISIONS OF THE NIGHT

The sun had set, and the clouds were sinking down between the high mountains into the Rhone valley. The wind was blowing from the south, an African wind driving over the high Alps, a Fohn which rent the clouds, and when the wind fell there was a moment's stillness. The scattered clouds hung in fantastic patterns among the tree-clad mountains. Above the hurrying Rhone they hung in forms like the monsters of an earlier world—eagles hovering in the air, frogs jumping in the marshes. Then they descended upon the rushing stream and sailed upon it, though still floating in the air. The torrent carried an uprooted fir tree with it, whose course in the water was marked by whirling circles. It was Vertigo,

Evil powers play their game around us and within us. Rudy had found out this, and thought much and often about it. What was it all that had happened there on the mountain around him and within him? Were they ghosts or feverish dreams? He had hitherto known neither fever nor any other illness. But while he blamed Babette he had looked closely into his own conduct. He had searched into the wild turmoil in his own heart, the burning Fohn that had raged there. Would he be able to confess all to Babette, every thought that might have turned into action during that hour of temptation? He had lost her ring, and it was really through that loss that she had won him back. Would she be able to confess to him? He felt as if his heart would break. When he thought of her, so many memories overwhelmed him. He saw her as if she were actually standing in front of him smiling, a high-spirited child. Many a sweet word which she had spoken out of the fulness of her heart passed like a ray of sunshine into his breast, and soon there was only sunshine there when he thought of Babette. Yes, she must be able to confess to him, and she would have to do it.

He went to the mill, and the confession was made, it began with a kiss, and the conclusion was that Rudy was the sinner. His great fault was that he had doubted Babette's fidelity, it really was abominable of him! Such mistrust, such violence might plunge them both into misery. Yes, indeed it might. And so Babette preached him a little sermon, which amused her and made her look charming, but on one point Rudy was right—Babette's godmother's nephew was a puppy. She would burn the book he had presented to her, for she did not want to possess the slightest thing that might remind her of him.

"Now that affair has blown over," said the parlour cat. "Rudy is here, and they are on good terms again, and that is the greatest happiness, people say."

"I heard the rats say last night," said the kitchen cat, "that the greatest happiness is to eat tallow candles and to have plenty of rancid bacon. Whom are we to believe, the rats or the lovers?"

"Neither of them," said the parlour cat, "that is the safest way."

Englishman, whom she had not seen for several months, and of whom she had not been thinking. Was he in Montreux, and would she see him at the wedding? A little shadow passed over her pretty mouth, and she knit her brows, but soon smiles came to her lips, joyous beams sparkled in her eyes, outside the sun was shining gloriously, and to-morrow was the day on which she and Rudy should be wed.

Rudy was already in the parlour when she entered it, and soon they started for Villeneuve. Both were radiantly happy, and so was the miller. He laughed and beamed in the best of tempers, a kind father and a good soul was he.

"Now we are the masters of the house!" said the parlour cat.

XV CONCLUSION

It was not yet evening when the three joyful travellers reached Villeneuve, where they had their meal. The miller sat down in an easy chair, smoked his pipe, and took a little nap. The young lovers went out arm in arm to the town and along the carriage road under the cliffs, which are here overgrown with brushwood, and by the side of the deep blue-green lake. The grey walls and heavy towers of the gloomy Chillon were mirrored in the clear waters. The little island with the three acacias lay still nearer, it looked like a nosegay on the sea.

"It must be lovely over there!" said Babette. She again felt the greatest desire to be over there, and this wish could be gratified at once. On the shore lay a little skiff, the rope by which it was fastened was easy to untie. They could see no one to ask permission to use it, and so they took it without further delay, for Rudy knew how to row.

The oars gripped the docile water like fins, that water so yielding and yet so powerful, that has a broad back to carry and a gaping jaw to devour, mild and smiling, gentleness itself, and yet inspiring terror, and strong to destroy. A foaming wake lay behind the skiff, which reached the island in a few minutes, and the two landed.

There was only room for two to dance here. Rudy whirled

and others of his kindred, who moved in spirals on the boiling stream. The moon lighted up the snow on the mountain tops, the dark woods and the wonderful white clouds, those phantoms of the night, spirits of the powers of nature. The peasant saw them through his window panes. They sailed down there like an army in front of the Ice Maiden as she came from her glacier castle sitting on her frail ship, the broken fir tree. The glacier water bore her down the stream to the open lake.

"The wedding guests are coming!" Air and water rang with the sound.

Visions without, visions too within, for Babette dreamed a wonderful dream.

She thought she was married to Rudy, and had been his wife for many years. He was chamois hunting and she was at home, and beside her sat the young Englishman, he with the golden beard. His eyes were eloquent, and his words cast a spell over her. He held out his hand to her and she felt she had to follow him. They walked away from the house, passing onwards, but downwards, always down. Babette felt as if a weight lay on her heart which became ever heavier. It was a sin against Rudy, a sin against God she was committing. Then suddenly she was left standing there. Her clothes were torn by thorns and her hair was grey. She looked upwards in her grief, and on the cliff she saw Rudy. She stretched her arms towards him, but dared not call to him or entreat him. It would have been useless, for she soon discovered that it was not he, but only his hunter's dress and his hat hanging on an alpenstock, such a figure as the hunters sometimes set up to deceive the chamois! And in unutterable woe Babette wailed. "Oh, would that I had died on my wedding day, my happiest day! My God, what a mercy, what a great blessing that would have been!" Then the best thing would have happened that could have befallen Rudy and me. None of us knows the future." And in impious grief she flung herself down into the deep abyss. A chord snapped, a mournful note sounded——!

Babette awoke—the dream was over and gone, but she knew that she had dreamt something terrible about the young

mountain glacier Rudy looked down into the water, only a single glance, but he thought he saw a golden ring turning and glittering and sparkling. He remembered his engagement ring, but this ring was larger, it widened into a sparkling circle, and in the midst of this there shone out clearly the glacier. Deep gorges yawned all around, and the water dripped and tinkled like chiming bells, and glittered with pale-blue flames. In an instant he saw what takes us many words to tell. Young hunters and young maidens, men and women who had sunk into the glacier chasms, were standing here alive and with smiling lips, and far beneath there rang the church bells of submerged towns. Worshippers knelt under the vaulted roof, where ice pinnacles formed the organ pipes and the mountain stream was the organ. The Ice Maiden sat on the clear, transparent floor. She raised herself up towards Rudy and kissed his feet. A death-cold icy shudder ran through his limbs and an electric shock—ice and fire! The contact was too brief to distinguish them.

"Mine! mine!" resounded around and within him. "I kissed thee when thou wast little, I kissed thee on thy mouth, now I kiss thee on thy feet, and thou art wholly mine!"

And he disappeared in the clear blue waters.

All was still, the church bells were silent, the last strains died away with the gleam on the crimson clouds.

"Thou art mine!" rang through the depths. "Thou art mine!" rang from the heights above, from the everlasting

Glorious fate, to pass from love to love, from earth to heaven!

A chord broke, a mourning strain rang out. The icy kiss of death had overcome the perishable body. The prologue was over, the life drama could begin, the discord was resolved into harmony.

Do you call this a sad story?

Poor Babette! for her it was unspeakable anguish. The skiff drifted ever farther away. No one on shore knew that the bridal pair had sailed over to the little island. The clouds hung low, the evening was dark. Alone, despairing, wailing, there she waited. A storm burst over her, flash after flash lightened over the Juras, over Switzerland, and back over

Babette round twice—three times, in a circle, then they sat down, hand in hand, on the little bench under the drooping acacias, and looked in each other's eyes, whilst all around was bathed in the glory of the setting sun. The fir woods on the mountains grew purple like heather in bloom, and where the trees ended and the rocks stood out they glowed as if the cliff were transparent. Up in the sky the clouds burned flaming red, and the whole lake was like a fresh bed of crimson roses.

Foot by foot the shadows climbed the snow-covered mountains of Savoy and coloured them dark blue, while the highest peak shone like red lava. They pictured to the fancy a time in the history of these mountains when their masses were raised red-hot from the lap of the earth and had not yet cooled. Rudy and Babette thought they had never seen such an alpenglow. The snow-covered Dent du Midi had a radiance like the disc of the full moon when it rises on the horizon.

"So much beauty, so much happiness!" they both exclaimed. "Earth has nothing more to give us!" said Rudy. "Such an evening as this is worth a whole lifetime! How often have I felt my happiness, as I now feel it, and thought 'Even if it all ended now, I have indeed had a happy life!' What a glorious world it is! And yet when the day drew to a close, another began, and it seemed to me still more beautiful than the last. How infinitely good God is, Babette!"

"I am so absolutely happy!" said she.

"Earth has no more to bestow on me!" cried Rudy. And the evening bells rang from the mountains of Savoy and of Switzerland, and in the west the dark-blue Jura mountains rose in the golden sheen.

"God grant thee everything good and great!" said Babette.

"He will," said Rudy, "to-morrow he will give it. To-morrow you will be wholly mine, my own sweet wife."

"The skiff!" cried Babette suddenly. The skiff which was to take them back had broken loose and drifted away from the island.

"I will fetch it back!" cried Rudy, and throwing off his coat and pulling off his boots, he jumped into the lake and swam with powerful strokes towards the boat.

Cold and deep was the clear blue-green water from the

Thus she sat lamenting there in the dark night. Through the deep silence Rudy's words seemed to her to ring, the last that he spoke to her "Earth has no more to give to me!" They rang out in the fulness of his joy, she recalled them in the depth of her sorrow

Years have since passed away The lake smiles and its shores, the vine is covered with swelling clusters, steamboats with waving flags cross backwards and forwards, pleasure boats with their sails full fly over the mirrored water like white butterflies The railway is opened beyond Chillon, it goes far into the Rhone valley Strangers alight at every station They have their guidebooks bound in red in their hands, and read in them to see what is worth looking at They visit Chillon, they see the little island with its three acacias out in the lake, and read in the book about the bridal pair who sailed over there one evening in the year 1856, of the bridegroom's death, and how "not till the following morning from the shore did they hear the cries of the bride".

But the guidebook says nothing of the quiet life of Babette with her father, not in the mill where other people dwell now, but in a pretty house near the station From the windows on many an evening she looks over the chestnut trees towards the snow mountains, where once Rudy used to roam She sees the alpenglow, the children of the sun resting on the high mountains and repeating the song of the wanderer, whose cloak the whirlwind carried off It took the covering but not the man

There is a rosy flush on the snow of the mountains, and a warm glow in each heart which cherishes the thought, "God knows what is best for us" Only it is not always revealed to us, as it was revealed to Babette in her dream.

Savoy—on every side flash after flash, one rolling peal after another, lasting for minutes at a time. The flashes made it as bright as noon. Each single vine stood out clear, and then all was again veiled in darkness. The flashes made loops and festoons and zigzag lines on the lake around her. They lighted it up on every side, whilst the peals were redoubled by the echo. On land the skiffs were drawn up on the shore. Every living thing sought shelter. And then at last down poured the rain.

"Where can Rudy and Babette be in this terrible weather?" said the miller.

Babette sat with folded hands, her head on her breast, dumb with grief. She wept and cried no more.

"In the deep water!" she said to herself. "Deep down as under the glacier."

Then there came to her mind what Rudy had told her of the death of his mother and of his own escape, how he had been raised from the glacier cleft almost a corpse. "The Ice Maiden has taken him again," she thought.

There was a blinding flash on the white snow. Babette started up. The lake rose in a moment like a shining glacier. The Ice Maiden was standing there, her majestic form glittering and pallid, and at her feet lay Rudy's corpse. "Mine!" she said, and all around was darkness again and the rolling waters.

"How cruel!" moaned Babette. "Why should he die just when the day of our happiness was dawning? Oh God, my God, enlighten my understanding! Shine into my heart. I cannot understand Thy ways. I grope darkly amid the decrees of Thine almighty power and wisdom."

And God enlightened her heart. A flash of thought, a beam of mercy pierced through her. She recalled her dream of the past night, vivid as it had been. She remembered the words and the wish she had uttered for whatever might be best for Rudy and herself.

"Woe is me! Was the germ of sin in my heart? Was my dream a foretaste of what my life might have been, whose course had thus been broken for my deliverance? Miserable woman that I am!"

haunted it. Certainly, it is called with good reason the "Wild Moor", and one can easily imagine how lonely and pathless it was at one time. What a waste of swamp and water it must have been a thousand years ago! Yet, indeed, in many ways one would have seen then just what is to be seen now. The reed was the same height, and bore the same kind of long leaves and bluish brown tufts as it bears now, the birch stood then as now, with her white bark and her delicate, loosely drooping leaves, and as for the living beings that came and went here, the fly then wore her gauzy gowns of the same cut as now, and the favourite colour of the stork was white and black, with red stockings. On the other hand, men cut their coats after quite another fashion, but every one, were he hunter or squire, knight or serving-man, who stepped forth on the quaking, unstable marsh, was overtaken, a thousand years ago, by the same fate as overtakes him who dares to tread on it to-day. The ill-fated mortal sank, and went down to the Marsh-king, as they called him, who reigns below in the great bog-kingdom. The Marsh-king might also be called King Gungel, but we prefer Marsh-king, and the storks call him so too. Little enough is known of the Marsh-king's rule, but perhaps that is just as well.

In the neighbourhood of the moorland, hard by the great arm of the North Sea and the Kattegat, which is called the Lymfiord, stood the timber house of the Viking, with its water-tight stone cellars, its towers and its three projecting stories. On the ridge of the roof the stork had built his nest, and there Stork Mama brooded on her eggs, and made quite sure that her brooding would lead to something.

One evening Stork Papa stayed out a very long time, and when he came home he looked greatly flurried and hurried.

"I have something shocking to tell you!" said he to Stork Mama.

"Let it wait!" said she. "Don't forget that I am brooding. It might hurt me, and then that affects the eggs."

"You must know it at once," continued Papa Stork. "She has arrived here, the daughter of our host in Egypt. She has been bold enough to take the journey up here, and now she is lost!"

THE MARSH-KING'S DAUGHTER

THE storks tell their little ones many a tale about the moors and reedy places. These tales are nearly always suited to their age and their understanding. The very little ones are content to have "Kribble, krabble, plurremurre" said to them, and think that first-rate, but the older ones want a story with a deeper meaning, or, at least, something about the family. Of the two oldest and longest tales which have been kept and handed down by the storks, we all know one, the story of Moses, who was laid by his mother in the Nile, where he was found by the King's daughter, who gave him a good education. He became a great man, but no one knows where he lies buried later on. That is quite a well-known story.

The second tale is still unknown, perhaps because it is almost a local story. It has come down, by word of mouth, from stork mama to stork mama for thousands of years, and each of them has told it better and better, and we are going to tell it now best of all.

The first pair of storks who told this story lived themselves at the time it took place, and had their summer abode on the timbered house of the Viking, which stands on a barren moor in Wendsyssel, that is, if we speak out of the fulness of our better knowledge, close to the great heath in the district of Hjørring, up near the Skaw, the northern point of Jutland. The desert there is to this day a great, wide, heathery bog, of which we may read a description in the Official Directory of the district.

It is said this was formerly the bottom of the sea, and that it has been raised. Now the moor stretches for miles on all sides, and is surrounded by damp meadows and quaking, almost floating marshes and peat bogs, on which grow bilberries and stunted trees. The mist floats almost constantly over this countryside; and seventy years ago the wolves still

Sit here for ever on the moor!" Thereupon they tore the swan plumage into a thousand pieces, so that the feathers were scattered around like a snow shower, and then both the faithless princesses flew away."

"That is too shocking!" said Stork Mama. "I cannot bear to hear more of it! Now tell me, though, what happened next."

"The Princess cried aloud and wept, her tears moistened the alder stump, and then it stirred, for it was no true alder, but the Marsh-king, he who lives and reigns in the depths of the bog. I saw myself how the tree stump turned round, and then it was no longer a tree stump, for long, slimy branches shot up from it like arms. Then the poor child, dreadfully frightened, sprang up and rushed away. She hurried across the green slimy mud, but that cannot carry me, much less her. She sank immediately, and the alder trunk dived likewise, in fact it was he who dragged her down. Great black bubbles rose out of the mire, and every trace of both had vanished. Now the Princess is buried in the Wild Moor. Never will she take the flowers to Egypt! It would have broken your heart to see it, little mother!"

"You should not have told me such a thing at all at this time," said she, "the eggs might suffer from it! The Princess will shift for herself, no doubt. Somebody is sure to come to the rescue. If it were you or I, or one of our people, then certainly it would be all up with us!"

"I shall look out every day, though, to see if anything happens," said Stork Papa, and so he did.

A long time went by, and then at last he saw a green stalk shoot up out of the deep bog. When it reached the surface of the water a leaf spread out, and unfolded itself wider and wider. Close to it a bud was formed, and as Stork Papa flew one morning over the stalk, the bud opened through the power of the warm sun rays, and in the cup of the flower lay a charming child, a little maiden, looking as if she had just risen out of her bath. The little one was so very like the Princess of Egypt, that the stork thought for the moment that it really was the Princess herself, but when he considered the matter a little, he made up his mind that it was

"She who is sprung from the race of the Fairies, is it? Tell me at once. You know that I cannot bear to be kept waiting in brooding-time!" gasped Stork Mama.

"You see, little mother, she believed what the doctor said, and what you yourself have told me. She believed there were flowers in the marsh up here which would bring healing to her sick father, so she flew hither in swan's plumage, in company with other swan princesses, who come every year to the north to renew their youth. She came hither, and she is lost!"

"You are really far too long-winded!" said the Stork Mama, "the eggs might get cold! I cannot bear to be kept in such suspense!"

"I was watching," continued Stork Papa, "and this evening, as I went into the reeds, where the marshy ground can bear me, three swans came up. Something in their flight said to me, 'Look out, that is not really a swan, that is only swan's feathers!' Yes, little mother, you have the same feeling as I have, you know at once if a thing is right or not!"

"Yes, yes," she said, "but tell me about the Princess, I have heard more than enough about the swan's feathers!"

"Here, in the middle of the moor, as you know, is a kind of lake," said Stork Papa. "You can see one end of it if you raise yourself a little. There, in the reeds and the green slime, lay the great trunk of an alder, on this the three swans alighted, flapped their wings, and looked about them, one threw off her swan's feathers, and I recognized her at once as our own Princess from Egypt. There she sat with no other garment than her long, black hair. She begged the other two—I heard her—to take good care of the swan plumage while she dived into the water to pluck the flowers which she thought she saw there. The others nodded, lifted the empty feather dress, and gathered it to them. Eh, thought I, what are they going to do with the feather dress of the Princess? and she probably was wondering about the same thing. She soon received an answer, yes, a very plain answer. The two rose and flew upwards with her swan plumage. 'Dive then,' they cried. 'Thou shalt never more fly in swan's feathers, thou shalt never see Egypt again

everything into the best order for giving a hearty welcome to the master and his followers. The long, coloured tapestries which she and her maids had themselves worked, and into which they had woven pictures of their gods, Odin, Thor, and Freya, were hung up. The slaves polished the old buckles which served as ornaments for the hall, cushions were laid on the benches, and dry wood on the fireplace in the middle of the hall, so that the flame could be kindled at once. The Viking's wife herself helped in the work, so that by the evening she was very tired, and quickly fell into a sound sleep.

When she awoke towards morning she was greatly shocked, for the child seemed to have vanished. She sprang from her couch, kindled a splinter of pine-wood, and looked all round the room; and at last, on that part of the couch where she stretched her feet she saw, not the child, but a great, ugly frog. She felt ill at the sight, and seized a heavy bar with which to kill the frog, but the frog looked at her with such wonderful, sorrowful eyes, that she could not strike the blow. Once more she looked carefully about the room, the frog uttered a faint, piteous croak. At that the Viking's wife shuddered, sprang from the bed to the dormer window, and tore it hastily open. Just then the sun appeared, shedding his rays through the window upon the couch and upon the great frog. Suddenly the wide mouth seemed to contract and grow small and red. The limbs stretched and straightened themselves, and took the fairest form, and it was her own charming little child that lay there, it was no ugly frog.

"What is this?" said she. "Have I dreamt an evil dream? Is it, then, my own lovely darling that lies there?" And she kissed and fondled it, but the child kicked, and struck, and bit like a little wild cat.

Not on that day nor yet on the day following did the Viking return, though, to be sure, he was on his way home, but the wind was dead against him, blowing to the south and fair for the storks. Fair wind for one is often a contrary wind for another.

When a few days and nights had passed, it was clear to the Viking's wife what ailed her child, it was a horrible spell

more likely that it should be the daughter of the Princess and the Marsh-king. No doubt, also, this was why it was lying in the cup of the water lily.

"But she cannot be left there," thought Stork Papa, "and in my nest there are already far too many of us. Yet stay, an idea occurs to me. The Viking's wife has no children, and how often she has wished for a little one! They say the stork brings the little babies, I will do so in earnest for once. I'll fly with the child to the Viking's wife. What rejoicing that will call forth!"

Then the stork lifted the little maid out of the flower-cup, flew with her to the raftered house, pecked a hole with his beak in the window, and laid the charming babe on the breast of the Viking's wife. Then he flew up to the Stork Mama and told her what he had seen and done. The young storks listened too, they were big enough for that.

"So you see the Princess is not dead," continued he, "she has sent the little one up here, and now she too is provided for."

"I said that from the beginning," cried Stork Mama. "Do think now a little about your own family. The travelling season draws near, and already now and then I have a quackling under my wings. The cuckoo and the nightingale are just off, and I heard the quails say that they too would go as soon as the wind seemed favourable. Our young ones will hold their own bravely in the manoeuvres, if I know them rightly."

The Viking's wife was glad beyond measure when she awakened next morning and saw the lovely little child lying in her bosom. She kissed it and pressed it to her heart, but it screamed frightfully and struck out with both hands and feet. It did not seem at all delighted. At last it cried itself to sleep, and as it lay there so quiet and still, it made a wondrously sweet picture. The Viking's wife was highly delighted. She felt well in body and soul, her heart was light, and it seemed to her that her husband and his men, who were absent, were coming home just as unexpectedly and suddenly as the child had come.

So she and the whole household had plenty to do, putting

the Gallic coast, where the people sang in terror as they did in Britain

“Deliver us from the wild Norsemen”.

Life and bustling pleasure filled the Viking's castle on the Wild Moor. The great mead cask was carried into the hall, the wood piles were kindled, horses were slaughtered, a great feast was to be served up. The priest who was to offer the sacrifice sprinkled the prisoners with warm blood, the fire crackled, the smoke gathered thick under the roof, the soot fell in flakes from the rafters, but they were used to all these things. Guests were invited and received handsome gifts. All former wrongs and falsehoods were forgotten. They drank deep, and threw bones in each other's faces as a sign of good humour. The bard—a kind of musician who, however, had been a warrior in the Viking's train, and knew about what he sang—gave them a song that filled with delight both the feast and the feasters. In it their warlike deeds were chanted, and whatever was the most wonderful thing each of them had done was set forth. Each verse ended with the refrain

‘ The goods of a man, and his gold,
The joy of a man, and his friends,
And himself, the grave shall hold,
But a great name never ends!’

At this they smote their shields and beat their plates in a most uproarious way with their knives and bones.

The Viking's wife sat on the cross-bench in the open council chamber. She wore a silken robe, and had golden clasps on her arms, and great yellow amber beads round her neck. She was in her richest dress, and the singer named her too in his song, and spoke of the golden treasure she had brought to her wealthy husband. The latter delighted with all his heart in the beautiful child. He had only seen it by day in its loveliness, and its fierce nature pleased him. The little girl, said he, may become a shield-bearing maid and guard her husband. She would not blink an eye if a skilled hand cut off her eyebrows in jest with a sharp sword.

The full cask of mead was emptied and a fresh one brought,

that lay upon it By day it was as lovely as an angel, but had an evil, savage nature, whereas at night it was an ugly frog, but gentle and mournful, and with great sorrowful eyes Here were two natures which, both within and without, changed with the loss and the return of the sunlight That, however, was because the little maid had during the day the outward form of her real mother, but the fierce nature of her father, while at night her descent from her father was seen in her bodily form, but within the child at the same time the mind and the heart of her mother held sway Who had the power to loosen this evil charm laid on the child by enchantment?

The Viking's wife lived in constant trouble and sorrow for the child, yet her heart clung to the little one, of whose state she dared tell her husband nothing when he came home He would soon be back now, and if she told him he would probably, as was the use and custom, expose the poor child on the highway, so that whoever chose could take it But the Viking's good wife could not find it in her heart to let that be done She made up her mind that the Viking should always see the child by clear daylight and never after sunset

One morning the rushing of storks' wings rustled loudly over the roof More than a hundred pairs of storks had rested there during the night after the great autumn manoeuvres, and now they flew high upwards, to go off to the South

"Every man to his post and ready," was the order, "wife and children with him!"

"How light we feel!" screamed the young storks in chorus "Something pleasant prickles and tickles down to our very toes We feel as if we were filled with nothing but living frogs Ah, how fine it is to travel abroad!"

"Keep nicely in line with us!" cried Papa and Mama "Don't chaite too much, it wearies the chest!" And then the storks flew away

At about the very same time the notes of the war-horn sounded away over the heath The Viking had landed with his men They came home richly laden with booty from

with frogs—a sight exactly to the taste of the storks. The youngsters thought their eyes must be deceiving them, everything was so splendid.

“It is always like that here, we always live thus in our warm country,” said Stork Mama, and the young ones’ mouths watered.

“Is there no more to see?” they asked. “Does this go much farther up the country?”

“There is nothing more to see,” answered Stork Mama. “Beyond this region there is only a very large forest, where the branches twine round each other and prickly vines bar the way. Only the elephant with his heavy feet can make a path for himself there, and there the snakes are too big for us and the lizards too lively. If you go to the desert you will get your eyes full of sand—that is, if it is fine, but if the great storm guns are in play, you will be caught in a sandspout. This is the best place. Here are the frogs and the locusts. I shall stay here and so shall you.” And so they stayed there.

The parents sat in the nest on the slender minaret. They rested, and yet were busily employed in smoothing and dressing their feathers and whetting their beaks on their red stockings. Now and then they stretched their necks and saluted each other gravely, raising their heads with their high foreheads and fine smooth feathers, out of which their brown eyes looked very wisely. The young females strutted among the sappy reeds, cast sidelong glances at the other young storks, made acquaintances, and at every third step swallowed a frog or tossed a little snake hither and thither, which they thought was becoming, and it was tasty as well. The young males soon began to fight. They struck each other with their wings, pecked with their beaks, even stabbed each other till the blood flowed. In this fashion, now this one, now that one, of the young squires and damosels was betrothed. And that was what they wanted, and why they were alive. Then they chose a nest and fell anew to fighting; for in hot countries everybody is violent and hot-tempered. But it was pleasant for all that, and the old birds particularly enjoyed it. Everything suits the young. Every day there was sunshine, every day there was plenty to eat, one could think of nothing but

for these were people who enjoyed things to the full. To be sure, they knew the old saying "The cattle know when to leave the pasture, but a foolish man knoweth not the measure of his appetite." Yes, they knew all that, but knowing is one thing and doing is another. They knew, too, "that even the welcome guest causes weariness if he sit too long in the house", but they sat on. Bacon and mead are good things. All went merrily, and at night the bondsmen slept in the warm ashes, and dipped their fingers in the greasy soot, and licked them. It was a glorious time!

Once more that year the Viking set forth, though the autumnal storms had already begun to rage. He led his men to the coast of Britain. That was a mere pleasure trip across the water, he declared, and his wife stayed behind with the little girl. This much is certain, that the foster-mother soon loved the poor frog, with its gentle eyes and deep sighs, almost more than the little beauty who bit and fought with all around her.

The raw, damp, autumn fog, which consumes the leaves of the trees, lay over forest and heath. "Featherless fowls", as the snow is called, fell in heavy showers. Winter set in with bitter cold. The sparrows took possession of the storks' nest and talked about the absent owners after their own way, but the pair of storks, with all their young, where were they?

The storks were now in the land of Egypt, where the sun poured down rays as warm as we get on a fine day in mid-summer. Tamarisks and acacias bloomed over the whole land. Mohammed's crescent shone brightly from the cupolas of the mosques. On the slender towers sat many a pair of storks resting after their long journey. Great flocks scattered and spread themselves in the nests, which lay close together on the venerable columns and ruined arches of temples in forgotten cities. The date palm lifted her fan on high like a parasol. The pale-grey pyramids stood like black shadows in the clear air of the far desert, where the ostrich urged her rapid flight, and the lion glared with great cunning eyes at the marble sphinx lying half buried in the sand. The waters of the Nile had sunk down, and the whole river bed swarmed

Nothing came of it, either for the sick man or for his daughter in the marshy heath. Yet we may as well listen to the people for a little, because one has to listen to many a thing in this world.

It is always better, however, to understand what has gone before, if we wish to know the meaning and worth of what is said, and we know at least as much of the story as Stork Papa.

"Love begets Life! The highest Love begets the highest Life! Only by Love can the sick man's life be saved!" So it had been said, and very wisely and beautifully said, by many, and the learned men believed it was a wise saying.

"That is a fine thought!" Stork Papa had said at once.

"I don't quite understand it," Stork Mama had replied, "however, that is not my fault, but the fault of the thought. It may be so, I have other things to think about."

The learned men had spoken of love for this or that one, and of the difference between the love which lovers feel and that between parents and children, of the love of the light for the plants—how the sun's ray kisses the earth and thereby the seed sprouts. It was all so wearisome and learned, that it was an impossibility for Stork Papa to follow it, not to speak of repeating it. He was quite weighed down with the thought, half shut his eyes, and stood all the following day on one leg, going over and over it. It was hard for him to bear the weight of all this learning. Still, one thing Stork Papa *did* understand. Everyone, high and low, had spoken out of his innermost heart, and had said that it was a great misfortune for thousands, indeed for the whole country, that the man lay sick and could not be healed, that it would spread joy and gladness over all the land if he got better. But where did the flower bloom that could bring him health? Accordingly they had sought in learned writings, in glittering stars, in weather and wind, sought in all the byways they could think of, and at last, as we have already said, had made out that "Love begets Life, the father's Life." Therein they had surpassed themselves and said a greater thing than they understood. They repeated it then, and wrote it down as a prescription, "Love begets Life". But how could they prepare

pleasure. Only in the rich castle, with the Egyptian host, as the storks called him, there was no joy to be found

The rich and mighty lord of the castle lay on his couch in the middle of the great hall whose walls were so gaily painted, that it seemed as if he were lying in a tulip tree, but he was stiff and crippled in every limb, and lay stretched out like a mummy. His family and his servants stood round him. He was not dead, nor could it properly be said that he was alive. The healing blossoms which she who most dearly loved him was to seek and bring home had never been brought. His fair young daughter, who had flown in swan's plumage away over sea and land to the far north, had never returned. "She is dead," the two swan maidens had said when they came back, and they had made up a story as follows. "We three," said they, "flew away together, high up in the air, a hunter saw us and shot an arrow at us, it struck our young friend and sister, and slowly singing her farewell, she sank down a dying swan into the forest lake. On the shore of the lake under a weeping birch we laid her in the cool earth. But we took our revenge, we bound fire under the wings of the swallow which nested beneath the thatched roof of the hunter, the house burst into brilliant flames, the hunter was burnt with the house, and the fire shone out across the lake to the weeping birch, where now she is turned to dust. Never will she return to the land of Egypt!"

And then they both wept, and when Stork Papa heard the story he clattered with his beak, so that it sounded far and wide.

"Lies and deceit!" he cried. "I would fain plunge my beak in their breasts."

"And break it off," added Stork Mama, "then you would look nice! Think first of yourself, and then of your family, the rest does not concern us."

"To-morrow I shall sit on the edge of the open cupola when the learned and wise men meet to discuss the state of the sick man," answered Stork Papa. "Perhaps they may get a little nearer the truth."

The learned men and sages met, and said a great deal, quite wide of the mark, of which the stork could make nothing

places enough between where we can hide them till the next journey. One swan's plumage certainly was enough for the Princess, yet to have two is always better. In northern lands, besides, one cannot have too many travelling wraps."

"Nobody will thank you for it," said Stoik Mama, "but you are the master! Except in breeding-time, I have nothing to say."

In the Viking's castle on the Wild Moor, whither the storks directed their flight in spring, the little maiden still stayed. They had given her the name of Helga, but the name was much too soft for such a temper as in this case had possession of the fairest form. With every month this temper showed itself in ever fiercer and fiercer outbursts. In the course of years, while the storks always made the same journey—in autumn to the Nile, in spring to the marsh—the child grew into a big girl, and before they were aware of it, she had become a beautiful young woman seventeen years old. Beautiful indeed was the husk, but hard and bitter the kernel! She was thought fierce and cruel even in those hard, dark times when most people were wild and savage.

It was a joy to her with her white hands to sprinkle around the reeking blood of the sacrificial horse. In one of her wild moods she bit the neck of the black cock right through when the high priest was about to kill it for sacrifice, and she said to her foster-father in solemn earnest:

"If your enemy were to tear off the roof of your house whilst you were lying asleep thinking everything safe, and if I saw or heard it, I would not awake you, even if I could. I never would do it, for my ears still tingle with the blow you gave me years ago. No, I have never forgotten it."

But the Viking took her words as a joke, he being, like everybody else, bewitched with her beauty. Of course, he knew nothing of Helga's change of shape and of temper at night. Without a saddle she would sit on her horse as if she were part of it when it galloped at full speed, and she did not dismount even when the horses quarrelled with and snapped at each other. She often threw herself with her clothes on from the high bank into the stormy waters of the bay, and swam to meet the Viking when his boat was steering towards

the thing according to the prescription—that was where they were baffled! At last they agreed that help must come through the Princess, through her whose whole soul hung upon her father; and in this way they contrived at last to save the situation. Yes, it was more than a year and a day since the Princess had betaken herself by night, when the brief lustre of the new moon was on the point of sinking, out to the marble Sphinx. She had thrown back the sand from the base of it and walked through the long passage, which led into the middle of the great Pyramid, where one of the mighty kings of old, surrounded by pomp and splendour, lies in his mummy case. There she had to lean her head on the breast of the dead man, and there it would be revealed to her where life and healing for her father were to be found.

All this she had carried out, and she had learnt in a dream that out of the deep lake in the swamp, far north in the Danish land, she must bring home the lotus flower which grows in the watery depths. The country, and the very spot where the lake was and the flower grew, had been shown to her; and she was told that, when she brought back the flower, then would her father be healed.

So she flew away in a swan's plumage from the land of Egypt to the heath country, to the Wild Moor. You see, Stork Papa and Mama knew all this, and now we too know it better than we did before. We know that the Marsh-king dragged her down with him. We know, too, that for the loved ones in her home she is dead for ever. Yet one of the wisest among the sages said as did the Stork Mama, "Never fear, she will come out all right yet", and with that they contented themselves at last and waited for what was to happen, because they knew nothing better to do.

"I would like to steal the swan feathers from the two false princesses!" said Stork Papa, "then, at least, they could not fly again to the Wild Moor and plot mischief. I will hide both swan dresses up there till someone has need of them."

"But where will you hide them?" asked Stork Mama.

"Up in our nest on the Wild Moor!" answered he. "I and our youngest children will share in carrying them thither and should it be too hard to bear them all the way, there are

did not know, seemingly, how to shift for herself, though you and the learned men said she did. Year in and year out I have flown in all directions round the great Eastern land, and she has never given a sign that she lives. I may as well tell you how, every year when I came here a few days before you to repair the nest and put things in order, I have flown backwards and forwards a whole night, as if I were a bat or an owl, over the open lake, but in vain. The two dresses of swan's feathers which I and the young ones carried here with us from the land of the Nile are therefore of no use. They caused us enough of trouble, for it took three journeys to bring them here, and now they lie under the nest. Should fire break out, the wooden house would be burned, they would then be lost."

"And our good nest would also be lost!" broke in Stork Mama, "but of that you think less than of your swan's dress rubbish and your marsh princess. You had better follow her into the marsh and remain with her! You are a bad father to your own children, that I have often said when I was hatching eggs for the first time. It is to be hoped that we or our young ones won't get an arrow in our wings from the bow of the wild girl. Helga knows not what she does. We have been longer at home here than she has, she ought to remember. We have never forgotten our duty, but have given our annual tribute—a feather, an egg, and one of our young,—which is right. Do you think I can go about in the hall and all around here, as I used to do in former times, and as I do in Egypt, where I am almost the comrade of the people, and forget myself and peep into pot and kettle? No, I sit up here and nurse my anger against her, the little wretch! and I am angry with you too! You ought to have let her lie quietly in the cup of the water lily, and she would have been dead long ago."

"You are much better than your word," said Stork Papa. "I know you better than you know yourself."

With that he gave a jump, flapped his wings twice proudly, stretched his legs behind him, and flew, or rather sailed, away without moving his wings. He was a good distance away when he spread his wings and gave a great flap with them

the shore. She would cut the longest lock from her beautiful hair and plait it into a string for her bow.

"To do a thing oneself is to do it well!" said she.

The Viking's wife was, like the women of her time, of a strong will and temper, only towards her daughter was she weak and timid. She knew well that her unlucky child lay under a wicked spell.

When her mother was on the terrace or in the court, Helga very often, out of sheer wickedness, perched herself on the railing round the well, seemed to fight with arms and legs in the air, and then suddenly to fall down into the narrow, deep well. There with her frog nature she plunged up and down, and then she would clamber round like a cat, and walk out, and up into the hall, the water dripping from her, and soaking the green leaves with which the floor was strewn.

There was only one cord which held Helga in leash. It was the evening twilight. At that hour she was quiet and seemed to grow thoughtful. She let herself be advised and guided. Then she was drawn to her mother by some feeling within herself. And when the sun set, and the inward and outward change was taking place, she sat quiet and sad, and shrank into the form of a frog. Her body was certainly much larger than that of the animal, but it was on that account much more horrible to look upon. She looked then like a wretched dwarf with the head of a frog and with webs between her fingers. Her eyes were full of sadness, voice she had none, only a hollow croak almost like the sob of a dreaming child. At these times the Viking's wife would take her on her lap, blind to the hateful form, and looking into the sad eyes would murmur—"I could almost wish to have you remain my dumb frog child. You are too terrible when beauty is given to your form."

And the Viking's wife wrote runes against witchcraft and sickness and threw them over the poor girl, yet there was no improvement to be seen.

"One can hardly believe that she was once small enough to lie in the cup of a water lily," said Papa Stork. "Now she is a real human being, and the very image of her Egyptian mother. Alas! we shall certainly never see her again. She

and life had been born in her heart's core. She took a step forwards, listened, then took another step, and seized with her awkward hands the heavy bar which was set across the door. Quietly and painfully she pushed the bar back, and equally softly she pulled back the bolt and seized the flickering lamp which stood in the anteroom. Was it a stronger will that gave her strength? She pulled back the iron bolt out of the cellar window and crept down to the prisoner. He slept. She touched him with her cold, damp hand, and when he awoke and saw the hideous form, he shuddered as if he had seen an evil apparition. With her knife she cut the cords that bound his hands and feet, and beckoned him to follow her.

He uttered the holy names, made the sign of the cross, and when the form remained motionless by his side he repeated these words from the Bible:

“‘Blessed is he that considereth the poor, the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble.’ Who are you? Whence come you with the outward appearance of an animal, while you willingly do deeds of kindness and mercy?”

The frog form nodded, and led him behind hanging curtains, through a lonely passage to the stables, and pointed out a horse which he was to mount. He swung himself on to its back, and she sprang up in front of him, holding firmly on to the mane of the animal. The prisoner understood her, and at a sharp trot he rode on the way, which he could never have found alone, out into the open heath.

He forgot her ugly form, and was only sensible of how the mercy and pity of God works through the unlovely. He prayed and sang holy songs. This made her shiver. Was it the power of these prayers and hymns which affected her, or was it the cold chill of the approaching dawn? What was she really feeling? She raised herself up, wished to stop the horse and dismount, but the priest held her back with all his might, sang a hymn, as if to loosen the spell which bound her in this hateful form.

The horse galloped still more wildly forward, the sky grew red, the first ray of the sun penetrated through the clouds, and with the light came the change in her form.



"AT THESE TIMES THE VIKING'S WIFE WOULD TAKE HER ON HER LAP"

life. At Hedeby¹ he would bring her to the holy Ansgarius, and there in that Christian town the spell she lay under must be removed. He might take her there if she would sit on the horse of her own free will, but only not in front of him

"Behind me you must sit, not before me! Your beauty and charm has a power which comes from wickedness. I am afraid of you—but yet my victory is assured through Christ"

He knelt down and prayed devoutly and earnestly. It was as if the still forest were consecrated by his worship into a holy church. The birds sang as if they were among the worshippers, the curled mint gave out its fragrance as if it wished to take the place of sweet-smelling ambergris and incense. In a loud voice he recited the words of the Holy Scriptures

"He will appear to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, and lead their feet into the way of peace."

He spoke of the deep yearnings of all nature, and as he spoke the horse, which had borne them in wild gallop, stood still in front of some large blackberry bushes, at which he tugged, so that the ripe soft berries fell over Helga's hand, offering themselves for refreshment. She slowly raised herself on to the horse's back, and sat there like one who walks in her sleep and who is neither aware she is awake nor moves. The Christian bound two twigs together with flax and formed a cross, which he held on high while they rode through the forest, which became ever more dense as the way went on, till at last it was lost in a pathless wilderness. Undergrowth of black thorn blocked the way, and it was needful to ride round it.

The spring did not form itself into a brook, but into a marsh, round which the horse must be guided. Strength and vigour were in the fresh forest air, and great power in the mild words that were uttered in faith and Christian love by the young priest whose heart yearned so earnestly to lead the poor lost girl to light and life.

It is said that the raindrops hollow hard stone, the waves of the sea round off the sharp edges of the pieces broken off

¹The original Danish name of the town of Schleswig

Helga became again the beautiful young girl with the fiercely cruel and wicked nature. He held this most beautiful young woman in his arms, and was terrified, he sprang from the horse and pulled it up. He thought he was anew under an evil spell. Helga likewise leapt from the horse and stood on the ground. Her short child's dress only reached to her knees. She drew the sharp knife from her belt and threw herself, quick as lightning, on the startled priest.

"If I only could reach you," shouted she, "if I could reach you, this knife should be driven into your body. You are as pale as ashes, beardless slave."

She rushed at him, and there and then began a fierce struggle. It really seemed as if an invisible strength was lent to the Christian. He held her firmly, and the old oak tree under which they stood came to his aid. The maiden's feet were caught in some loose roots of the tree, and were held there. A spring rippled quite near. The priest sprinkled Helga with the fresh water, sprinkled it on her breast and face, and commanded the unclean spirit to come out of her, and blessed her after the Christian custom. But the water of faith has no power where the spring of faith does not flow from within. Yet even in this its power was shown, something more than mere human strength was to be seen in his way of fighting the powers of evil that struggled within her. The holy treatment overpowered her. She let her arms drop, and glanced at him with pale cheeks and looks of surprise. He seemed to her to be a mighty sorcerer, and versed in the black arts. He repeated mysterious runes, and made mystical signs in the air. She would not have quailed had he brandished over her head the gleaming axe or the sharp knife, but now, when he made the sign of the cross on her breast and brow, she did so, and she sat there like a tame bird, her head resting on her breast.

Then he spoke to her in soft words of the loving deed which she had done for him during the night, when she in the hateful form of a frog came to him, unloosed the cords which bound him, and led him out to light and life. He told her that she was also bound, wound tightly round with cords as he had been, and she must be led by him out to light and

was the work of the evil genius of the place, or some wonderful piece of witchcraft, and in great fright fled from the spot

The full moon had already risen, and soon the earth was bathed in its shimmering light. Out of the thicket, in the frightful form of a frog, crept poor Helga. She remained standing in front of the corpse of the Christian priest and of the horse that had been killed. She looked at them with eyes which seemed to weep, and from the frog's head issued a croak, croak, like the sound of a child when it bursts into tears. She stooped first over one and then over the other. She scooped up water with her hand, which was larger and more hollowed from having webs between the fingers. She poured water over the bodies, although they were dead. They remained dead. She understood that quite well. Soon wild beasts would come and tear their bodies in pieces. But no, that must not happen! So she dug a hole in the earth as deep as she could. She wished to prepare a grave for them. She had nothing to do this with save the branch of a tree and her two hands. Between her fingers were the webs spread out, and these were torn, and the blood streamed over her hands. At length she saw that she could not do the work in this way. Then she scooped up water again and washed the face of the dead man, and covered it with fresh, green leaves. She brought large branches and spread them over him, and threw dried leaves between the branches. Afterwards she laid the heaviest stones which she could carry above the dead body, and filled in the openings with moss till she thought that the cairn would be strong enough and would safely guard the body of the priest. In this hard work the night slipped away and the sun rose, and beautiful Helga stood there in all her loveliness, with bleeding hands, and for the first time she had maidenly tears on her cheeks.

It seemed as if, during the change that took place in her, two natures fought with one another within her. She shivered all over, looked around as if awakened from uneasy dreams. Then she staggered up to a slender tree, which she seized and clung to to give her support, and in a trice she clambered like a cat up to the top of the tree and perched there. She

the rocks. The dew of mercy fell upon Helga and softened the hardness and smoothed the roughness of her nature. It was indeed not visible in her, and she herself was not aware of it, but does the germ in the lap of the earth know that by means of the nourishing dew and the warm rays of the sun what it hides within itself will grow and blossom? /

As the song of the mother to her child sinks into his heart, and he lisps some of the words after her without understanding them, and these later turn themselves into thoughts, which stand out ever more clearly as time goes on, so it was here with the working of the Word.

They rode out of the forest, across the heath, and on through pathless woods. Towards evening they came upon a band of robbers.

"Where did you steal the charming young girl?" shouted the robbers, as they seized the horse by the bridle and dragged both riders off. The priest had no other weapon but the knife which he had torn from Helga, but with this he struck out right and left. One of the robbers flung his axe at him. The young priest sprang aside, else he would have been struck, and the sharp hatchet sunk so deep into the neck of the horse, that the blood gushed out, and the animal fell to the ground. Then Helga started, as if awakened suddenly from her long deep sleep, and hurried over to the moaning animal. The priest put himself in front of her to shield and guard her, but one of the robbers flung his heavy iron hammer at him, and struck him on the forehead and shattered it, so that blood and brains spurted out all around. He fell to the ground dead.

Then the robbers seized beautiful Helga by her white arms and slim waist, but at that instant the sun set, and as the last ray died out she was changed into the form of a frog. The pale-green mouth stuck forth over the half of the face, the arms became thin and slimy, and a broad hand with webbed fingers stretched itself out in the form of a fan. Then the robbers drew back from her in terror. There she stood amongst them a hideous monster, and, as is the custom of the frog, leapt up higher than her own height, and vanished into the thicket. The robbers were not sure whether this

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often heard sung and spoken during that ride through the forest now came to her lips, and she said aloud, "Jesus Christ"

Then the frog's skin fell off, and she was again a lovely young maiden. Her head bent wearily, her limbs needed rest. She fell fast asleep.

But her sleep was short. About midnight she awoke. Before her stood the dead horse, so radiant, and so full of life that it shone from his eyes and wounded neck. Close by was seen the murdered priest, "more beautiful than Baldui" the Viking's wife would have said, but now he came as in a flame of fire.

Such earnestness, such stern justice, such a penetrating glance shone from the large, mild eyes that it seemed to reach the farthest corner of her heart. Beautiful Helga trembled before this look, and her memory awoke as vividly as if it had been the last day. Every kindness that had been done to her, every loving word that had been said to her, came back to her. She understood it all. It had been love that supported her during the days of her trial, while the creature formed of spirit and clay, soul and mine, struggled and wrestled with evil. She saw that she had only followed the impulse of her nature, and had done nothing of herself. Everything was done for her, everything was the result of destiny. She bent her head humbly, confessing her own deep imperfection before Him who can read every thought of the heart. At the same moment, in a flash from the fire of purification, she was illumined by the flame of the Holy Spirit.

"Daughter of the Mine," said the Christian priest, "from mine and clay you come, but from the earth you will rise! The sunbeam within you shows whence you have really sprung, and has given back to the body its natural form. It is not born of the body, but is a ray from God. I come from the land of the dead, you also must travel through the deep valleys to the radiant mountain country where dwells mercy and perfection. I shall not lead you to Hedeby to receive Christian baptism, you must first draw aside the thick veil that covers the deep waters of the moorland, and

THE MARSH-KING'S DAUGHTER

sat there like a frightened squirrel, and stayed perched up there all alone in the solitary stillness of the forest, where everything is quiet and dead—dead quiet, as they say. Butterflies circled round one another in play, hand by hand were several anthills, each with its many hundreds of workers, little creatures, that constantly moved to and fro. An innumerable cloud of gnats danced in the air, one swarm beside another, and there were hosts of buzzing flies, ladybirds, golden wings, and other little winged creatures. The rain-worm crept out of the damp ground, the mole threw up its heaps, all else was still, dead—all around dead. None but the magpies saw Helga. They flew screaming round the top of the tree on which she sat. The birds hopped up to her on the branches with bold curiosity. One glance of her eye was the signal to frighten them away. They could not understand her, and she could not understand herself.

When evening closed in, and the sun sank, the change of shape called her to fresh action. She slid down from the tree, and, as the last ray of sunshine vanished, she stood there in the shrunken frog form, with the torn webs between her fingers, only her eyes still shone with a radiancy of beauty which they had hardly possessed in her lovely form. They were the gentlest, holiest maiden's eyes that beamed out from the frog mask. They told of deep, strong feeling and of a kindly human soul, and the beautiful eyes overflowed with tears which eased her heart.

On the mound there still lay the cross made of the branches of trees bound together, the last work of him who now rested cold and dead beneath it. A thought struck Helga, and she lifted the cross and set it up between the stones over him and the dead horse. In sorrowful remembrance, she burst into tears, and in this soft mood she hollowed out the sign of the cross in the sand, all round the grave, thus forming a symbol of protection. While she was marking the signs of the cross, the webs between her fingers fell off like a torn glove, and when she washed her hands in the spring she looked with wonder at their soft whiteness. Again she made the sign of the cross in the air, between herself and the dead. Her lips quivered, her tongue moved, and the name which she had so

Then the cock in the Viking's castle crowed, and the dream forms vanished, carried away by the wind and mother and daughter stood face to face.

—“Am I she who looked from the deep water?” said the mother.

“Am I she who beamed from the polished shield,” said the daughter.

They drew near to one another, and with fast-beating hearts flung their arms round one another in a warm embrace.

“My child! You flower of my own heart! My lotus of the deep waters!”

She embraced her child again, and wept, her tears were a new baptism into life and love for Helga.

“I came hither in swan’s plumage, and here threw off the feathers,” said the mother. “I sank through the quaking marsh, deep down to the ground, which closed me in like a wall. Soon I found myself in fresher water—some power drew me deeper and ever deeper. I felt the pressure of sleep on my eyelids, and fell asleep. Dreams possessed me—I thought I was lying again in the pyramid of Egypt, yet ever before me stood the swaying alder tree that had struck terror into me up above on the surface of the marsh. I gazed at the knots and wrinkles in the trunk, it lighted up into colour, and took on the shape of hieroglyphics, it was the shell of the mummy I was looking at. At length it broke in pieces, and there stepped out the thousand-year old king, a mummy figure, black as pitch—a glistening black, like the wood shed or the greasy black marsh slime—whether it was the Mummy King or the Mummy of the Pyramid, I knew not which. He threw his arms round me, and I felt as if I should die. Then I felt life in me again, and my bosom grew warm, and a little bird struck it with its wings, and then twittered and sang. The bird flew from my bosom to the heavy black covering above, but a long green band united it still to me. I listened, and well understood his longing note. ‘Freedom! Sun him to the father!’ Then I thought of my father and the sunny light of home, my light, my love, and I loosened the bird and let the bird flutter away—to its home, to its father. Since that hour I have not dreamed, I kept one sleep, truly

THE MARSH KING'S DAUGHTER

bring forth the living root of your life and your cradle to the light. You must do this before you can receive consecration."

He lifted her on to the horse, and handed her a gold censer like the one she had seen in the Viking's castle. From this there arose a sweet, strong perfume, and the open wound on the forehead of the dead man gleamed like a sparkling diadem. He took the cross from the grave and held it aloft.

They now rode away through the air across the rustling forest and over the hills where the warriors and then dead chargers lay buried. The brazen figures on the monuments rose up, sprang forward, and planted themselves on the tops of the hills, the bright gold fillets, with the gold ornaments on their foreheads, gleamed in the moonlight, and their mantles fluttered in the wind. The dragon that watches over buried treasures raised his head and looked after them. The hobgoblins peeped out from under the hills, and from the edge of the field they flitted to and fro waving red, blue, and green torches that glowed like the sparks from burning paper.

They fled on over wood and heath, over river and swamp, up to the Wild Moon, over which they flew in wide circles. The Christian priest held aloft the cross, which gleamed like gold, and from his lips fell devout prayers. Beautiful Helga joined in the hymns as a child happily joins in its mother's song. She swung the censer, from which rose streams of incense so strong and wonder-working that the reeds and bulrushes burst into blossom. Every germ pushed itself up from the deep ground—everything that had life came up. A clump of water lilies spread itself out like a carpet worked in lilies, and on this lay a sleeping woman, young and beautiful. Helga thought she was looking at her own reflection in the still water. It was her mother she saw, the wife of the Marsh-king, the Princess from the banks of the Nile.

The dead priest wished that the sleeping one should be lifted on to the horse, but it sank under the burden as if its body were only a pall that fluttered in the wind. The sign of the cross gave back its strength to this air phantom, and the three now rode away from the lake to the dry land.

HANS ANDERSEN'S FAIRY TALES

"the mother and the young ones are waiting there. How they will open their eyes and clack with their beaks! Yes, the mother does not say so much, she is brief and to the point, and therefore there is the more sense in what she says I shall just clack once, so that they will hear we are coming"

Stork Papa clacked, then he and the swans flew towards the Viking's castle

In the castle all still lay in deepest sleep It was late in the evening before the Viking's wife went to rest She was anxious about Helga, who had disappeared three days ago along with the Christian priest Helga must have aided him in his flight It was her horse that was missing from the stable. But by what power had all this been accomplished? The Viking's wife thought of it with wonder, and of the astonishing things that were said to have been done by the white Christ, and that had come to pass through Him and those who believed in Him and followed Him Her crowding thoughts took form in a dream She thought she was still awake on her couch, and darkness reigned all around The tempest drew near, she heard the sea roaring and rolling east and west, like the billows of the North Sea and the Kattegat The horrible serpent that surrounds the earth in the depths of the ocean shook in convulsive spasms It might be the night of the fall of the gods, as the pagans called the Last Day, when all would pass away even the great gods themselves The war trumpet sounded, and the gods rode over the rainbow, clad in armour, to fight their last battle Before them flew the winged Valkyries, and the ranks of the dead warriors stood close The whole air shone with the Northern Lights, and yet the darkness was left conqueror It was a ghastly sight.

Close beside the frightened Viking's wife Helga sat on the floor in the ugly form of a frog She trembled and crept close to her foster-mother, who took her on her lap and clasped her lovingly, though the frog form was indeed ugly The air was filled with the sound of sword and club blows and with the hissing of arrows, as if a storm of hail was sweeping over them It was the hour when heaven and earth are rent asunder, the stars fall, and all sinks into Surtur's sea of fire But she knew that there would come a new earth and a new

a long and heavy one, till in this very hour sweet sounds and sweet scents awoke me and set me free "

The green band from the mother's heart to the wings of the bird, where did it flutter now? whither has it blown away? Only the stork had seen it. The band was the green stem, the knot was the radiant flower, cradle of the child, now opened out into beauty, and laid again on its mother's heart.

And while the two lay heart to heart, Stork Papa flew in ever narrower circles round them, and at last he darted in swift flight away towards his nest. Thence he fetched the long-treasured swan's dresses, and cast one over each of them. The feathers enfolded them, and they rose from the earth two white swans.

"Now we will talk with one another," said Stork Papa. "Now we can understand one another, even if the beak of the one bird is different from that of the other. It happens most luckily that you have come to-night, for to-morrow we should have been off and away—Mother, and I, and the young ones. We are flying to the south. Yes, just look at me! I am quite an old friend from Nileland, and the mother too. Her heart is warmer than her words. She always thought that the Princess would be able to shift for herself. I and the young ones carried the swan's plumage up here, but how glad I am, and how lucky it was that I was still here! When day dawns we travel from here, a great company of storks. We will fly in front and do you fly after us, then you cannot lose your way. I and the young ones will keep an eye on you."

"And the lotus flower which I was to bring," said the Egyptian Princess, "she flies by my side in swan's plumage! I am bringing the flower of my heart with me, and so the riddle has been solved! Homeward! homeward!"

But Helga said that she could not leave the Danish land without once more seeing her foster-mother, the loving wife of the Viking. Each tender memory, every loving word, every tear that her foster-mother had shed, came to her mind, and at this moment she almost felt as if she loved that mother the most.

"Yes, we must go to the Viking's castle," said Stork Papa,

HANS ANDERSEN'S FAIRY TALES

"We won't wait for the swans," said Stork Mama "if they want to come with us, they may come! We can't sit here till the curlews travel! There is something so nice in travelling in families like this, not like the finches and the partridges, who fly with the cocks by themselves and the hens by themselves, that is quite unseemly, to speak plainly, and what kind of flapping of wings are the swans making there?"

"Well, everyone has his own way of flying," said Stork Papa, "the swans take it slantingly, the cranes in a triangle, and the curlews in a spiral"

"Don't talk of spirals when we are flying up here," said Stork Mama, "it gives the young ones desires that can't be gratified"

"Are these the high mountains of which I have heard?" asked Helga in her swan's dress

"These are storm clouds driving beneath us," answered her mother

"What kind of white clouds are these that stand up so high?" asked Helga

"What you see there are the mountains covered with everlasting snows," said her mother, and they flew over the Alps to the blue Mediterranean

"Africa! Africa! Egypt's shore!" exulted the daughter of the Nile in her swan's form, when she saw her home From high up in the air it looked only a pale-yellow, wavy streak And the birds all looked and hastened their flight

"I smell Nile mud and wet frogs!" said Stork Mama, "and I begin to feel quite hungry Now you will taste for your selves! And you will see marabouts and ibises and cranes they all belong to the family, only they are not nearly so beautiful as we are They affect to be very superior, especially the ibis He is really quite spoilt by the Egyptians They make him into a perfect mummy, stuffing him with spices I would rather be stuffed with live frogs, and so would you, and so you will be, too It is better to have something in your stomach when you are living, than be made a show of when you are dead That's my opinion, and I am always right"

"The storks have come now," they said in the great house on the bank of the Nile, where the royal master lay on a

heaven, that the cornfields would wave and swell where the sea rolled now over the barren sea bottom, and that the ineffable God would reign. To Him—to God—Baldur ascended, the gentle, loving Baldur, delivered from the kingdom of the dead. He came, and the Viking's wife saw him. She knew his face, it was the face of the prisoner, the Christian priest. "The white Christ!" she cried aloud, and with the cry she kissed the forehead of the ugly frog child. Then the frog covering fell off, and Helga stood before her in the fulness of her beauty, charming and gentle as never before, her eyes radiant. She kissed her foster-mother's hands, blessed her for all her care and love during the days of trial and grief, for the thoughts which she had suggested to her and awakened in her, for the mention of the name which she repeated, "white Christ!" Then the beautiful Helga arose, a mighty swan, widely outstretching her wings with a rustle, as when the flock of birds of passage sets forth.

The Viking's wife awoke, and outside there still sounded through the air this loud flapping of wings. She knew it was the season when the storks leave, it must have been their flight she heard. Once more she would see them, and bid them farewell. She rose from the couch, stepped on to the terrace, and saw on the roof of the house and everywhere stork upon stork. Round the castle, and above the high trees, crowds of them flew in great circles. But opposite her and the terrace, at the well where Helga sat so often and grieved her with her wild ways, there sat two swans, looking at her with intelligent eyes. She remembered her dream. She was full of it still, as if it were reality. She thought of Helga in swan's form, she thought of the Christian priest, and her heart grew suddenly light.

The swans flapped their wings, and bent their heads as if they wished to send her a greeting, and the Viking's wife held out her arms towards them, grasping the meaning of it all. She smiled through her tears, and then sank into deep thought.

Then there was a flapping of wings and a clacking of beaks, and all the storks rose on high to take their journey to the south.

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descended to the Marsh-king, and from their union sprang the flower.

"I don't exactly know how to repeat the words," said Stork Papa, who had listened from the roof, and now was going to tell his own people what he had heard. "What they said was so involved. It was so clever and so well thought out that rank and gifts were at once bestowed on them. The prince's cook even received a high mark of distinction—probably for the soup!"

"And what did *you* get, then?" asked Stork Mama. "They ought not to forget the most important person, and that is you, at all events. The learned men have done nothing in the whole matter beyond making use of your mouth, your reward will certainly come to you."

Later in the night, when the gentle quiet of sleep lay upon the now happy household, someone was still awake, not Stork Papa, he stood unheeding upon one leg and slept at his post, but Helga was awake. She leant out over the balcony and gazed into the clear air. She looked at the great bright stars, bigger and purer in radiance than they had been in the north, and yet the same. She thought of the Vikings wife in the wild marsh land, of the gentle eyes of her foster-mother, and the tears she had shed over the poor frog child who now lived in the magnificent spring air by the waters of the Nile, under the glory of the radiant stars. She thought of the love which had dwelt in the bosom of the pagan woman, the love which had been called forth towards a pitiful creature, a wicked beast in human form, a loathsome thing in beast's form. She looked at the shining stars and thought of the glory that proceeded from the brow of the dead man as she flew with him through the wood and over the moor. Tones rang in her memory. Words she had heard during their ride when she was borne amazed and trembling through the breezes, words from the great spring of love, the highest love which embraces all generations. In truth, what had not been given, won, and attained by this love?

Beautiful Helga was absorbed night and day in her great happiness, and was lost in the contemplation of it, like the child who turns quickly from the giver to busy itself with the

white cushion in the open hall under a leopard's skin. He was not living, neither was he dead, but hoping and waiting for the lotus flower from the deep marsh in the far north. Kinsmen and servants surrounded his couch.

Into the hall flew two magnificent swans. They had come with the storks. They throw off the dazzling white plumage, and two charming women stood there, as like one another as two drops of dew. They bent over the pale old man, and threw back their long hair, and when beautiful Helga bent over her grandfather his cheeks flushed, his eyes grew bright, and life came to his benumbed limbs. The old man arose strong and young once more, daughter and granddaughter sang round him like a joyous morning greeting after a long and troubled dream.

Joy reigned throughout the house and in the stork's nest too, but here, to be sure, the joy was more especially on account of the high living, and the number of frogs that came up on the earth in crowds.

Then the learned men hastily put down in rapid outline the story of the two princesses and of the flower of healing as an important event and a blessing for the house and the country. Meanwhile the stork couple told it to their family in their own way, but not till all were first satisfied, for they had something else to do than to listen to stories.

"Now, at last you will get something out of the affair," whispered Stork Mama, "that can't be otherwise."

"What should I get?" said Stork Papa. "What have I done? Nothing at all!"

"You have done more than all the others," answered Stork Mama. "Without you and the young ones the two princesses would never again have seen Egypt or brought about the recovery of the old man. You are sure to get something. They will certainly confer the doctor's hat upon you, and our young will afterwards be born with it, and their young again, and so on. You already look like an Egyptian doctor—in my eyes." The learned and wise set forth the primary thought, as they called it, which underlay the whole occurrence. "Love begets Life." This theme they expounded in diverse ways. The warm sunbeam was the Egyptian princess, who

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In early spring, when the storks were again starting for the north, Helga took off her golden bracelet, and scratched her name on it. She beckoned to Stork Papa, put the golden ring round his neck, and bade him give it to the Viking's wife. The latter would gather from the bracelet that her foster-daughter lived, that she was happy, and that she thought of her mother.

"This is heavy to carry," thought Stork Papa when he had it round his neck, "but gold and honour are not to be thrown on the highroad. The stork brings happiness, but that has always been admitted."

"You lay gold and I lay eggs," said Stork Mama, "but you only lay once and I lay every year. Yet no one ever acknowledges it. That really hurts one."

"You have a good conscience, little mother," said Stork Papa.

"You can't cover yourself with that," said Stork Mama, "it won't blow you a fair wind, nor will it fill your stomach."

The nightingale that sang in the tamarind bushes was soon to set out for the north too. Helga the beautiful had often heard her sing up there on the Wild Moor, and now she thought she would give her a message. Helga understood the bird's language since she had flown in the swan's plumage. She had often spoken it with the stork and the swallow, so the nightingale would understand her. She bade the nightingale fly to the beechwood in Jutland, where the mound of stones and branches was raised. She bade her get all the little birds to build their nests round the grave, and ever again and again to let their songs be heard over it. And the nightingale flew away—and time flew away also.

The eagle stood on the pyramid in August, and saw drawing near a stately caravan of richly laden camels, splendidly dressed and armed men on snorting Arabian horses, gleaming white as silver, with red, quivering nostrils, and great, thick manes, that fell down over their graceful legs. Wealthy guests—a royal prince from Arabia, beautiful as a prince should be—entered the house, on the roof of which the empty stork's nest stood. The storks were at that time in the far north, but they were soon to return, and on the day they

splendid gift. She seemed utterly taken up with the ever-increasing bliss which might and would come to her. As by a miracle she was being borne to ever greater joy and happiness, and in these thoughts she lost herself one day so thoroughly that she thought no more of the Giver. It was the exuberance of her young spirit which was spreading its wings in fearless flight. Her eyes shone, but suddenly a loud noise down below in the court broke into the course of her thoughts. There she saw two large ostriches running round very quickly in narrow circles. She had not seen this creature before—a great bird, awkward and unwieldy. The wings looked as if they had been cropped, and the bird itself as if it were bewitched, and she asked what had happened to the creature, and understood for the first time the legend that the Egyptians tell of the bird.

Once upon a time the children of the ostrich family were very beautiful, and had big and strong wings. Then one evening the big birds of the wood said to the ostrich, "Brother, shall we to-morrow, if God will, fly to the river and drink?" And the ostrich answered, "I will." With daybreak they flew away, and first their flight was upward, high up towards the sun, towards the eye of God, ever higher and higher, and the ostrich kept far in front of all the other birds. He flew proudly up towards the light, and trusted in his strength, not thinking of the Giver, nor saying, "if God will." Then the avenging angel drew back the veil from the sun's sea of flames, and in an instant the bird's wings were scorched, and it sank pitifully to the earth. The ostrich and his race, therefore, may never again rise from the earth. He flees in terror, blundering round in circles in a narrow space. This legend is a warning to us men to say always in thought and wish, in all our undertakings, "if God will."

And Helga bowed her head pensively in thought, looking at the circling ostrich in its fear, and its silly joy at the sight of its own big shadow on the white sunlit wall, and a deep gravity took root in her mind and thoughts. A life rich in present and in future happiness was given, was attained. What was still to happen, still to come. The best, "if God will."

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"Only one more look," she begged, "only a single short minute."

"We must get down to earth," he continued, "or the guests will all have gone away!"

"Only a look, the last——"

Helga stood again in the verandah, but the marriage lights without were all vanished, the lights in the hall extinguished, the storks gone, not a guest to be seen, no bridegroom—all in one short minute dispersed.

Then great grief came upon her. She rushed through the empty hall into the next room. There, strange warriors were sleeping. She opened a side door that led to her own room, and when she thought she was entering it, suddenly she found herself in the garden. It was no earlier here—the sky was red, it was dawn.

"Three minutes only in heaven," she thought, "and a whole night had passed on earth!"

Then she looked at the storks, and called to them in their own language. Stork Papa turned his head to her, listened, and came near.

"You speak our language," said he. "What do you want? Why do you, a strange woman, appear here?"

"I am Helga. Do you not know me? We talked together three minutes ago on the verandah."

"That is nonsense," said the stork. "You must have dreamt it."

"No, no," said she, and she reminded him of the Viking's castle, of the great sea, and of his journey hither.

Then Stork Papa blinked. "That is indeed an old story. It belongs to the time of my great-grandfather. There was certainly in Egypt a princess who came from Denmark, but she disappeared on the evening of her marriage many hundred years ago, and never came back. You can read it yourself on the monument in the garden. There are swans and storks carved on it, and above your own image is standing in white marble."

It was so. Helga saw, understood, and sank down on her knees.

The sun broke out brilliantly, and just as formerly, always

came back, that day so full of joy and happiness, a wedding was to take place. Beautiful Helga, gleaming with silks and jewels, was the bride. The bridegroom was the young prince from Arabia. Bride and bridegroom sat between the mother and grandfather at the top of the table.

She did not look at the bridegroom, with his brown manly cheeks, on which a dark beard curled, nor did she look into the fiery dark eyes that rested upon her, but only at the glittering stars which shone down from the heavens.

Then there was heard a loud rustling of wings beating the air. The storks were returning home, and the old stork pair, although tired after their journey and needing rest, flew at once down to the railings of the verandah, as they were already aware that a festival was being held. At the frontier they had heard that Helga had had them painted on the wall—they had a part in her history.

"That is very pretty and sensible," said Stork Papa.

"That is very little," said Stork Mama, "less it could hardly be."

As Helga caught sight of them, she rose and went out to the verandah to stroke their backs. The old stork pair shook their heads and bent their necks, and the youngest amongst them felt very much honoured by their reception.

Helga looked up at the star, which shone ever more and more clearly, and between it and her a figure moved, purer than the light visible through it. It hovered quite near her. It was the dead priest, he had come to her marriage feast, had come down from the kingdom of heaven.

"The glory and splendour there surpasses all that earth knows," said he.

And Helga, the lovely maiden, prayed earnestly and more touchingly than she had ever prayed before, that she might for only a single minute look within, only cast a single look into the kingdom of heaven towards the Father of all.

The priest bore her into the glory and splendour, up into a surging sea of sounds and thoughts. Not only around her, but also within her, there were light and sound such as words cannot express.

"Now we must go back, you will be missed!" said the priest.

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